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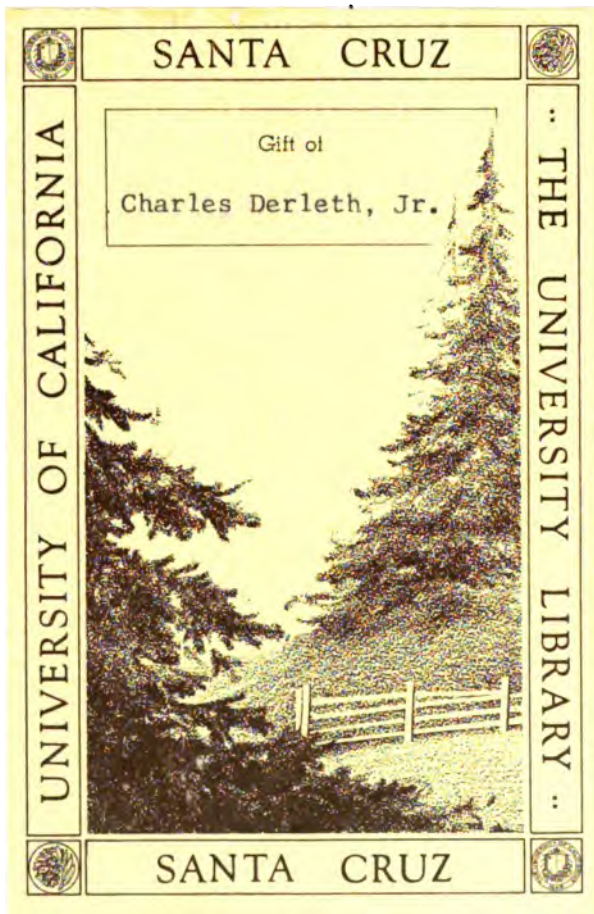
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## NOTE

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# I

## APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS, PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC  
LITERATURE

Two winters ago Columbia University invited its teaching staff, its students, and its friends to a series of lectures which set forth the essential quality and the existing condition of each of the several sciences, and to-day Columbia University begins another series of lectures devoted to a single one of the arts — the art of Literature. In the opening decade of this twentieth century, when the triumphs of Science are exultant on all sides of us, there would be a lack of propriety in failing to acknowledge its power and its authority; and a grosser failure would follow any attempt to set up Art as a rival over against Science. Art and Science have each of them their own field; they have each of them their own work to do; and they are not competitors but colleagues in the service of humanity, responding to different needs. Man cannot live by Science alone, since Science does not feed the soul; and it is Art which nourishes the heart of man. Science does what it can; and Art does what it must. Science takes no thought of the individual; and individuality is the essence of Art. Science seeks to be impersonal, and it is ever struggling to cast out what it calls the personal equation. Art cherishes individuality and is what it is because of the differences which distinguish one man from another; and therefore the loftiest achievements of Art are the result of the personal equation raised to its highest power.

Of all the liberal arts Literature is the oldest, as it is the most immediate in its utility and the broadest in its appeal.

Better than any of its sisters is it fitted to fulfil the duty of making man familiar with his fellows and of explaining him to himself. It may be called the most significant of the arts, because every one of us, before we can adjust ourselves to the social order in which we have to live, must understand the prejudices and desires of others, and also the opinions these others hold about the world wherein we dwell. Literature alone can supply this understanding. The other arts bring beauty into life and help to make it worth living; but since mankind came down from the family tree of its arboreal ancestors, it is Literature which has made life possible. It is the swiftest and the surest aid to a wide understanding of others and to a deep understanding of ourselves. It gives us not only knowledge but wisdom; and thereby it helps to free us from vain imaginings as to our own importance. Ignorance is always conceited, since it never knows that it knows nothing; and even knowledge may be puffed up on occasion, since it knows that it knows many things; but wisdom is devoid of illusion, since it knows how little it ever can know.

The poet Blake declared that we never know enough unless we know more than enough; and who of us is ever likely to attain to that altitude of comprehension? After all, even the most protracted investigation of fact and the most incessant meditation on truth must be circumscribed by the brief radius of human knowledge. What are threescore years and ten? What is a century even? And as time pulses by, ever quickening its pace, we are often tempted to echo Lowell's envious ejaculation, "What a lucky dog Methuselah was! Nothing to know, and nine hundred years to learn it in!"

If Literature is the most venerable of the arts, and if it is the most significant, it should be approached with the outward signs of reverence. When we stand up here to discuss it, to declare its importance and to consider its purpose, it is fit that we robe ourselves in stately academic costume

and don gown and hood, that the noble theme may be dealt with in all outward respect. Buffon was so possessed by the dignity of letters that he put on his richest garb, with lace ruffles and gem-studded sword, before he sat him down at his desk to labor at his monumental work; and Machiavelli also arrayed himself "in royal, courtly garments," and thus worthily attired he made his "entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old."

But this lordly approach is not imperative, for Literature, lofty as it may be at times, is not remote and austere. At its best it is friendly and intimate. It is not for holidays only and occasions of state; it is for everyday use. It is not for the wise and the learned only, but for all sorts and conditions of men. It provides the simple ballad and the casual folk-tale that live by word of mouth, generation after generation, on the lonely hillside; and it proffers also the soul-searching tragedy which grips the masses in the densely crowded city. It has its message for every one, old and young, rich and poor, educated and ignorant; and it is supreme only as it succeeds in widening its invitation to include us all. At one time it brings words of cheer to the weak and the downhearted; and at another it stirs the strong like the blare of the bugle. It has as many aspects as the public has many minds. It is sometimes to be recovered only by diligent scholarship out of the dust of the ages; and it is sometimes to be discovered amid the fleeting words lavishly poured out in the books of the hour, in the magazines, and even in the daily journals. It may be born of a chance occasion and yet be worthy to survive through the long ages — the Gettysburg address, for example, and the "Recessional."

Literature is now what it was in the past, and it will be in the future what it is now, infinitely various and unendingly interesting. We can venture to project the curve of

its advance in the years to come only after we have grasped what it is to-day; and we can perceive clearly its full meaning in our own time only after we have acquainted ourselves with its manifold manifestations in the centuries that are gone. True it is that Literature is the result of individual effort and that its sublimest achievements are due to single genius; and yet it is racial also, and it is always stamped with the seal of nationality, which is the sum total of myriads of individuals. Literature is ever marked with the image and superscription of the people whose ideas it expressed and whose emotions it voiced. Races struggle upwards and establish themselves for a little while and then sink back helpless; mighty empires rise and fall, one after another, each believing itself to be destined to endure; and it is mainly by the Literature they may chance to leave behind them that they are rescued from oblivion. What do we really know about Assyria and about Babylon? Where are the cities of old time? Why is it that we can see Sparta only vaguely, while Athens towers aloft in outline we all recognize? The massive monuments of Egypt persist through thousands of years, but the souls of the dwellers in the valley of the Nile are not known to us as we know the souls of the Hebrews, whom they took captive, and whose sacred books reveal to us their uplifting aspirations and their unattained ideals. We can extract not a little light from the laws of Rome, but not so much as we can derive from the lighter writings of the Latins; and the code which is known as the novels of Justinian does not afford us as much illumination as the realistic fiction of Petronius. The many ruins of Rome are restored for us and peopled again with living men and women, only when we read the speeches of Cicero, the lyrics of Horace, and the letters of Pliny.

It is not in the barren annals of a nation that we can most readily discover the soul of a race. Rather is it in those lesser works of the several arts in which the men of old

revealed themselves unconsciously and yet amply. The records of the historians and the codes of the lawgivers are assuredly not to be neglected, but they are not more significant than the unpretending efforts of forgotten artists, the painters of the Greek vases, for instance, and the molders of the Tanagra figurines. The idyls of Theocritus are not less illuminating than the orations of Demosthenes or the tragedies of Æschylus.

Literature is precious for its own sake, but it has ever an added value from the light it cannot help casting on the manners and customs which disclose the indurated characteristics of a people. The unmistakable flavor of the Middle Ages lurks in the etherialized lyrics of the German minnesingers no less than in the more mundane fabliaux of the French satirists. We cannot open a book, even if it shelters only evanescent fiction, aiming solely to amuse an idle hour, without opening also a window on a civilization unlike any other; and he would be a traveler of marvelous ability who could make us as intimately acquainted with the simple rustics of the Black Forest, with the primitive peasants of Sicily, or with the deserted spinsters of New England, as we find ourselves after we have read a volume or two by Auerbach, by Verga, or by Miss Wilkins. Some of us there are who love Literature all the more because it can catch for us this local color, fixed once for all, and because it can preserve for us this flavor of the soil, this intimate essence of a special place and of a special period.

"The real literature of an epoch," Renan declared, "is that which paints and expresses it," and such is the real Literature of a race also. Perhaps the epoch is most completely painted and expressed when the author is interpreting the life that is seething about him, dealing directly with what he knows best, as Plautus has preserved for us the very aroma of the teeming tenements of the Latin metropolis, as Molière has limned for us the "best society" of France under Louis

XIV, and as Mark Twain has set before us the simple ways of the Mississippi river-folk. But, after all, this does not matter much; and even if a writer is handling a theme remote from his own experience, he is still painting his own epoch and expressing his own race, although he may not be aware of it. Whatever ineffectual effort he may make, no man can step off his shadow. However violently he seeks to escape, he is held fast by his heredity and his environment. "Hamlet" is a tale of Denmark, "Romeo and Juliet" is a tale of Italy, and "Julius Cæsar" is a tale of ancient Rome; but Shakspeare himself was an Elizabethan Englishman, and these tragic masterpieces of his were possible only in the sceptered isle set in the silver sea in the spacious days of the Virgin Queen. Racine borrowed his stories from Euripides, and he persuaded himself that he had been able to make Greek drama live again; but his "Phèdre" and his "Andromaque" are French none the less, and they are stamped with the date of the seventeenth century. So absolutely do they belong to the period and to the place of their author that Taine insisted that these tragedies of Racine could best be performed in the court costumes and in the full-bottomed wigs of the reign of Louis XIV, since only thus could they completely justify themselves.

This intimate essence of nationality is evident not only in the thoughts that sustain the work of the artist and in the emotions by which he moves us, it may be discovered also in his style, in his use of words to phrase his thoughts and to voice his emotion, in the pattern of his composition, and in the rhythm of his sentences. The way in which he links paragraph to paragraph may lead us back to his birthplace and the stock from which he sprang. We can catch the accent of his ancestors in the rise and fall of his periods, and sometimes it seems almost as though his many forefathers were making use of him as their amanuensis.

Consider Shakspeare and Bacon, and set them over against each other. They were contemporary Englishmen, alike and yet unlike, alert and intelligent, energetic and wise, both of them, yet with a different wisdom, masters of expression each in his own fashion, and possessed of the interpreting imagination. When our attention is called to it, as Mr. Havelock Ellis has lately done, we cannot fail to find that Shakspeare "with his gay extravagance and redundancy, his essential idealism, came of a people that had been changed in character from the surrounding stock by a Celtic infolding," and that Bacon "with his instinctive gravity and temperance, the suppressed ardor of his aspiring intellectual passion, his temperamental naturalism, was rooted deep in that East Anglian soil which he had never so much as visited."

To seek to seize these subtler differences, due not so much to nationality as to provinciality, if the word may be thus applied, is not to inquire too curiously, for it is to advance in knowledge and to draw a little nearer to that secret of genius, which must remain ever the inexplicable result of the race, the individual, and the opportunity. There is not a little significance in Mr. Ellis's suggestion that we can perceive in the pages of Hawthorne "a glamor" of which "the latent aptitude had been handed on by ancestors who dwelt on the borders of Wales," whereas Renan came from a family of commingled Gascon and Breton descent, so that "in the very contour and melody of his style the ancient bards of Brittany have joined hands with the tribe of Montaigne and Brantôme." It was Comte who declared that "humanity is always made up of more dead than living."

There is significance also in the fact that the most of the major writers of Latin Literature were not Romans by birth and that not a few of them were Spaniards, Seneca for one and Martial for another. Petronius was possibly a Parisian, and the mother of Boccaccio was probably a French woman. It is to be noted also that Rutebœuf, Villon, Regnier, Scarron,



Molière, Boileau, La Bruyère, Regnard, Voltaire, Beaumarchais, Béranger, and Labiche were all of them natives of Paris. Who can dispute the deduction that certain of the dominant characteristics of French literature may be due to the circumstance that so many of its leaders were born in the streets of the city by the Seine? May not this be one of the causes of that constant urbanity which is the distinguishing note of the best French authors?

That accomplished scholar, the late Gaston Boissier, did not hesitate to assert that he wrote not for his fellow-investigators, but for the general reader. This is what all French authors have done when they have preserved the true Parisian tradition. They have willingly renounced overt individuality and they have shrunk from a self-expression which they could not transmit without the risk of shocking, or at least of annoying, those to whom they were talking, pen in hand. They accepted the wholesome restraints of the rules of Art, which, as M. Faguet has maintained, "are all of them counsels of perfection, allowing every exception which good taste will justify, from which it results that the one important rule is to have good taste." The value of good taste in Literature will be strikingly revealed to any one who comes from the profitable pleasure of reading Boissier's "End of Paganism," with its rich scholarship, its large and penetrating wisdom, its gentle urbanity, and its ripe ease of style, to take up Pater's "Plato and Platonism," thin and brittle in its temper, artificial and affected in its manner, and, in a word, self-conscious and berouged. Still may we hail France in the words of the Scotchman Buchanan:—

"At tu, beata Gallia,  
Salve, bonarum blanda nutrix artium."

There is ever profit in this effort to seize the potent influence of heredity and environment, even upon the genius who may seem at first glance to be the least controlled in the

exuberance of his personality. We have grasped a true talisman of artistic appreciation when we can compare the practical common sense and the austere gravity of the Roman with the inexhaustible curiosity and the open-minded intelligence of the Greek, and when we contrast the restraining social instinct of the French with the domineering energy of the English. But however interesting may be this endeavor to perceive the race behind the individual, and to force it to help explain him, there are other ways of seeking an insight into Literature not less instructive.

We can confine our attention, if we please, to a chosen few of the greatest writers, the men of an impregnable supremacy. We can neglect the minor writings even of these masters to center our affections on their acknowledged masterpieces. We may turn aside from the authors individually, however mighty they may be, and from their several works, however impressive, to consider the successive movements which one after the other have changed the stream of Literature, turning it into new channels and sweeping along almost every man of letters, powerless to withstand the current. We may perhaps prefer to abandon the biographical aspects of Literature to investigate its biological aspects, and to study out the slow differentiation of the several literary species, history from the oration, for example, and the drama from the lyric. Or, finally, we may find interest in tracing the growth of these critical theories about literary art which have helped and which have hindered the free expansion of the author's genius at one time or at another. There are many different ways of penetrating within the open portals of Literature. All of them are inviting; all of them will lead a student to a garden of delight; and which one of them a man may choose will depend on his answer to the question whether he is more interested in persons, or in things, or in ideas.

There is unfading joy in a lasting friendship with a great

writer, whether it is Aristotle, "the master of all that know," or Sophocles, who "saw life steadily and saw it whole"; Dante, who "wandered through the realms of gloom," or Milton, the "God-given organ-voice of England." Such a friendship brings us close to a full mind and to a noble soul. And such a friendship can be had only in return for loyal service, for a strenuous resolve to spare nothing needed for full appreciation of the master's genius. A friendly familiarity with an author of cosmopolitan fame can be achieved only by wide wanderings, to and fro, here and there, in the long centuries in search of the predecessors whom he followed, the contemporaries to whom he addressed his message, and the successors who followed the path he had been the first to tread. Wisely selected, by an honest exercise of our own taste, a single author may serve as a center of interest for the loving study of a lifetime. Lowell found that his profound admiration for Dante pleasantly persuaded him to studies and explorations of which he little dreamed when he began. A desire to understand Molière will lead an admirer of that foremost of comic dramatists to investigate the history of comedy in Greece and Rome, in Spain and Italy, and to trace out the enduring influence of the great French playwright on the later comedy of France, England, and Germany; it will also tempt him into unexpected by-paths, whereby he may acquire information about topics seemingly as remote as the Jesuit methods of education, as Gassendi's revival of the atomic theories of Lucretius, and as the practice of medicine in the seventeenth century.

Closely akin to this devotion to one of the mighty masters of Literature is the concentration of our interest on a single literary masterpiece. We may prefer to fill our ears with "the surge and thunder of the Odyssey" or to recall the interlinked tales "of the golden prime of good Haroun al Raschid." We may find ample satisfaction in following the footsteps of one or another of the largely conceived cos-

mopolitan characters, figures which have won favor far beyond the borders of their birthplace. Some of these heroic strugglers live only in the language which they lisped at first, while others have gone forth to wander from one land, one literature, one art, that they may tarry awhile in other lands, other literatures, and other arts.

After all his travels Ulysses abides with his own people; the gaunt profile of Don Quixote still projects itself against the sharp hills of Spain, and Falstaff is at home only in the little island where he blustered boldly and breezily. But Faust is a seedling of one soil transplanted into another, where he struck down deeper roots, only to tower aloft again in the land of his origin. And Don Juan, the lyrical hero of a mystical Spanish legend, touched at Italy, before he was received in France, where he was transformed into the implacable portrait of "a great lord who is a wicked man." And from the French drama "Don Juan" strayed into English poetry and into German music; so Faust, born obscurely in Germany, ventured out from English poetry into German drama and into French music. It is well for the arts that there is and always has been free trade in their raw materials, and that no customhouse can take toll on the ideas which one nation sends to another to be worked up into finished products. From race to race, from century to century, from art to art, there is unceasing interchange of intellectual commodities; and no inspired statistician can strike the balance of this international trade whereby men are enabled to nourish their souls.

Nor are these brave figures the sole travelers whose wanderings we may trace from one literature to another, subduing their native accents to new tongues. Even humbler characters may bear a charmed life; the intriguing slave of Greek comedy was taken over by the Latins, to revive after a slumber of more than a thousand years in the Italian comedy-of-masks and in the Spanish comedy of cloak-and-sword,

from which he stepped forth gaily to disguise himself as the Mascarille and the Scapin of Molière, and as the Figaro of Beaumarchais, of Mozart, and of Rossini.

Although many lovers of letters may be tempted to devote themselves mainly to the masters and to the masterpieces of Literature and to the perennial types which Literature has seen fit to preserve through the ages, there are other students who will find their profit in fixing their attention rather on the several movements which have modified literary endeavor. Even to-day one cannot help perceiving the persistence of the irrepressible conflict between the ideals of the Greeks, who sought for beauty always, and the ideals of the Jews, who set aloft duty. Hellenism swept swiftly from Athens to Rome, and then to all the shores of the Mediterranean, until it spent its force and finally found itself desiccated into Alexandrianism. Then, in its turn, the Hebraic spirit, softened by Christianity, spread abroad from distant and despised Palestine until it attained to the uttermost boundaries of the wide-flung Roman Empire. The influence of these contending ideals is still evident in this twentieth century of ours, especially in the obvious cleavage between the artistic aspirations of the races of Romance origin and those of the peoples of Teutonic stock.

Certain of the less admirable consequences of a narrow acceptance of the Hebraic doctrines revealed themselves in the misguided asceticism of the Middle Ages, thereby making easier the early triumphs of the Renaissance, which was in its essence an effort to recapture the joyous liberty of the Greeks. The new learning and the new discovery of the wisdom of the ancients was indeed a new birth for the arts, and for Literature not the least. Man came into his own once again, and he was in haste to express himself. He drew a long breath and felt at last free to live. As was inevitable, he pushed back the limits of liberty until he sometimes at-

tained an unworthy and unwholesome license. His new knowledge made him arrogant and intolerant; and he was ready to reject all restraint. Yet in time he was able to recover not a little of the harmony and of the proportion which had characterized the great Greeks, even if he never quite attained to their simplicity and to their sympathy.

Then the reaction came at last, and just as Hellenism had shriveled up into Alexandrianism, so the Renaissance in its turn dried up into the empty and formal Classicism of the eighteenth century, with its code of rules for every art. Classicism lost its grasp on the realities of life, and it cheated itself with words. It kept the letter of the law and refused to conform to its spirit. It sterilized the vocabulary of verse. It left the poet with no fit instrument for the wireless communication of emotion. In England it gave us the poetry of Alexander Pope and the criticism of Samuel Johnson; and in France it codified the regulations which were responsible for a long succession of lifeless tragedies, and by its emphasis upon legislation to curb Literature it brought about the reaction of the Romanticists, who succeeded only in the negative work of destruction and who failed lamentably to establish their more positive contentions.

Romanticism had its rise contemporary with the American Revolution and with the French; and in all its manifestos there rings the tocsin of revolt. It promulgates its declaration of the rights of man in the domain of Art; and it tends to a stark individualism leading straight to the anarchy which refuses to acknowledge any check upon the caprice of the moment. It exalts the illegal, the illegitimate, and the illicit. It glorifies the outlaw and the outcast; and it relishes the abnormal rather than the normal, the morbid rather than the healthy. The violence and extravagance of the romanticism of Victor Hugo, for example, made inevitable the realism of Turgenieff and Howells. The principle of Art for Art's sake, which the French Romanticists took for a battle-cry

and which is stimulating if it is properly understood, is pernicious when it is misread to mean that the artist has no moral responsibility. Life is influenced by Literature as much as Literature is influenced by life. Many a suicide in Germany was the result of Werther's self-pitying sorrows; and many a young man in France took pattern by Balzac's sorry heroes.

As instructive as any study of these successive literary movements is an inquiry into the several literary species, with due consideration of their evolution, their permanence, and their occasional commingling one with another. There is a special pleasure in tracing the development of oratory, for example, down from the days of the Greeks to our own time, deducing its essential and eternal principles, and weighing the influence of Demosthenes on Cicero, and of both on Bossuet and on Daniel Webster. There is an equal profit in observing how history has been able to separate itself from oratory on the one hand and from the epic on the other. A most interesting illustration of the progress from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous is to be found in the evolution of Athenian tragedy, which included at first much that was not strictly dramatic. It developed slowly out of the lyric; and in the beginning it contained choral dances, epic narratives, and descriptive passages. Amid these confused elements it is not always easy to seize the essential action of the drama. But as Greek tragedy grew, it came slowly to a consciousness of itself, and it eliminated one by one these non-dramatic accessories, until at last we find a story shown in action and represented by a group of characters immeshed in an inexorable struggle. A parallel development took place a little later in the Greek comic drama, whereby the lyrical-burlesque of Aristophanes became the more prosaic comedy of Menander; the earlier conglomerate of incongruous elements discarded one by one its soaring lyric, its personal lampooning, and its license of political satire, while at the same time it steadily

strengthened the supporting plot, with the appropriate interrelation of character and situation.

No literary species has had a more unexpected and a more unprecedented prosperity than the novel in prose, which in the nineteenth century became the most popular of forms, essayed by many a writer who possessed only a small share of the native gift of story-telling. The novel is almost the only one of the literary species that the Greeks of the Golden Age did not develop and carry to a perfection which is the despair of all later men of letters. They seem to have cared little for prose fiction; and when they had a story to tell they set it forth in verse, inspired by the muse of epic poetry. To-day that forsaken maiden can find work fit for her hands only by laying aside her singing robes and condescending to bare prose.

Two of the foremost of modern masters of prose fiction, Cervantes and Fielding, have claimed that their stories were, in very truth, epics in prose. On the other hand, George Meredith seemed to consider the novel to be derived rather from comedy; and there is no question that the expansion of prose fiction was aided, also, by the delicate work of the seventeenth-century character-writers and of the eighteenth-century essayists. We may, if we choose, declare that the series of papers in which Steele and Addison sketched the character and the career of Sir Roger de Coverley was, in fact, the earliest of serial stories. In Literature, as in life, he is a wise child who knows his own father; and a writer may have supposed himself to be a nameless orphan when in reality he is the missing heir of many honorable ancestors.

Prose fiction may be the offspring of the epic and it may have received a rich legacy from the essay; but it has grown to maturity under the guardianship of the drama, and in the closest comradeship with both comedy and tragedy. The earlier novelists, Cervantes, Le Sage, and Fielding, had all begun as playwrights; so also had the later, Hugo and Dumas.



The influence of Corneille and Racine on Mme. de La Fayette is as indisputable as the influence of Molière on Le Sage and of Ben Jonson on Dickens. And since it has become the dominant literary form, the novel has in its turn served as a stimulant to the drama. There is no difficulty in tracing the impression made by "Gil Blas" on the "Marriage of Figaro" and by "Götz von Berlichingen" on "Ivanhoe." Nor can any disinterested inquirer dispute that the social dramas of Dumas fils and of Augier are deeply indebted to the "Human Comedy" of Balzac, and that the comedies of Mr. Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones owe much to the mixture of humor and pathos to be found in the pages of Dickens and Thackeray.

Once when an American painter in Rome was told by a purse-proud picture-buyer that she did not pretend to know anything about Art, but she did know what she liked, the irritated artist could not repress the swift retort, "So do the beasts of the field!" To know what we like is only the beginning of wisdom; and we ought to be able to give good reason for the faith that is in us. The French, who are subtly curious in their use of words, make a useful distinction between a *gourmet*, the delicate taster, and a *gourmand*, the gross-feeder; and the distinction holds in Literature as well as in life. The wise Goethe tells us that "there are three classes of readers — some enjoy without judgment, some judge without enjoyment; some there are who judge while they enjoy and who enjoy while they judge." It is within our power always to gain admittance into this third group and to attain a reasoned appreciation of the authors whose writings we relish.

Indeed, we may even acquire an open-mindedness which will carry us a little farther, until we can understand how it is that sometimes we admire what we do not personally enjoy, and that on other occasions we may for the moment find pleasure in what we do not greatly admire. We can learn to control our likings; and in time we can correct our instinc-

tive tendency to let our personal preferences erect themselves into eternal standards. Of course, these personal preferences must ever be the basis of our ultimate judgments, since we are born always with a bias in favor of one school or of the other. Our native tendency is toward the ancient or toward the modern, and we are by instinct either romanticists or realists, whether we are conscious of this prejudice or not. Our opinions may be as the leaves that change color with the revolving seasons; but our principles are rooted in us. It is fate, rather than free will, which decides for us in which camp we will find ourselves enlisted. Before we were born it was settled for each of us, once for all, whether we should delight in the massive simplicity of the Attic dramatists with their unerring union of a content of high value with a form that seems to be inevitable; or whether we should revel rather in the rich luxuriance and bold energy of the Elizabethans; the one moving majestically with the sweep of a glacier, and the other boiling over with the impatience of a volcano.

But even if we cannot help being partizans, we ought to strive to master our prejudices so that we may learn at least to understand the spirit of the masterpieces wrought by those with whom we are not in accord. The critic needs not only insight and equipment; his task calls also for sympathy and for disinterestedness. The code of criticism is not as the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not; it changes from race to race and from epoch to epoch; it is modified by the successive movements of human feeling and of human thought.

The scholars of the Renaissance, secure in their inheritance of Greek wisdom, had a sublime belief in the comprehensiveness and in the certainty of their knowledge; but now in this new twentieth century of ours we moderns —

“Whom vapors work for, yet who scorn a ghost,  
Amid enchantments, disenchanted most” —

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we are at last aware that we are but peering through a chance crack in the dark wall which shuts us in, and that we can only glimpse a fragment of knowledge, glad that even so little is granted to us. We have surrendered the hope of ever attaining final truth; but none the less are we still nerved by the longing for it. Perhaps there are a few who would echo Lessing's proud declaration that he valued the privilege of seeking the truth above the actual possession of it.

Criticism must needs lag behind creation, even if literary criticism may be also creation itself in its own fashion. The critic cannot do his work until after the lyricist and the dramatist and the orator have done theirs. It is on them that he feeds, and from their unconscious practice he derives his reasoned principles. In fact, it is only when the earlier impulse of poetry was beginning to slacken a little, that the critic came forward to undertake his parasitic task. He felt it to be his duty, as indeed it is, to apply to the present the standards of the past; and it was long before he was willing to recognize the possibility that these standards might be found in the living languages as well as in the dead.

Apparently the earliest attempt to hold up a modern author as worthy of detailed study was in 1373, when Boccaccio began his lectures on Dante; and so late as 1768, when Gray was appointed to a chair of Modern Literature and Languages at Cambridge, he did not feel himself bound — so Lowell notes — to perform “any of its functions except that of receiving his salary.” Yet, even then, Lessing had already conceived of Literature as a single whole, however multiform its manifestations might be in many tongues. Lessing is the first of modern critics, as he is the foremost; and he pointed out the path of progress to Sainte-Beuve, to Taine, and to Brunetière. It is due to their investigation into the laws which govern the evolution of Literature that the attitude of criticism is now more tolerant, and indeed more modest, than it was when Ronsard felt himself authorized to speak of the “naïve facility”

of Homer, and when Milton, with all his admiration, deemed that Shakspeare "warbled native woodnotes wild." Thoreau anticipated our later opinion when he asserted that "in Homer and in Chaucer there is more of the serenity and innocence of youth than in the more modern and moral poets."

Brunetière was perhaps the most suggestive of recent literary critics, abounding in fertile generalizations, and applying to Art ideas supplied by Science. Here he was following Taine rather than Sainte-Beuve, who was more keenly interested in the idiosyncrasies of individual authors than in the larger movements of Literature. Sainte-Beuve preferred to give us "biographic psychology," to borrow Taine's apt phrase. Yet even in criticism there are few real novelties; Sidney's "Defense of Poesy," for example, is imitated from the Italians; Taine's theory of the influence of heredity and environment is amplified from Hegel; and the objections which adverse critics have brought against the veracious realism of Mr. Howells are curiously akin to those that Petronius urged against the Roman poet, possibly Lucan, who had ventured to write an epic in which there was less inventive exuberance and more interpretative imagination. Gaston Boissier even discovered a vague premonition of the struggle-for-life theory in Saint Augustine's "City of God."

Time was when man lived in a cave until he learned how to put together a wooden frame for a more commodious dwelling; and after a while he filled up this framework with the bricks he had found out how to bake, and traces of this temporary device are still evident in the decorations of the later and loftier temples which the Greeks built of marble. Only of late has man gone back to the primitive frame, putting it together now, not with wood, but with wrought steel; and the sky-scraper, however modern it may seem to us, is in reality a reversion to an ancient type of building. A similar spectacle greets us in all the arts, especially in the art of Literature;

the new is ever the old, even when it presents itself with all the latest improvements. Genius reveals itself when the hour is ripe; it does its work in its own fashion; it comes and it goes again, leaving us the richer. There have been many men of many minds, speaking in their several tongues; but Literature is one and indivisible. It has a voice for every mood. It cheers and sustains; it inspires and uplifts; it lights the path for all of us. It passes the flaming torch from sire to son, Greece to Rome, Rome to the Renaissance, the Renaissance to the modern world.

“All passes. Art alone  
Enduring stays to us;  
The bust outlasts the throne,  
The coin, Tiberius;

“Even the gods must go;  
Only the lofty Rime  
Not countless years o’erthrow,  
Nor long array of Time.”

## II

### SEMITIC LITERATURES

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LITERATURE AND THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES

LONG before the masterpieces of Greek Literature were conceived, the God Nebo, as the Babylonians themselves explained the beginnings of their culture, had brought the art of writing to the Delta of the Tigris and the Euphrates. In attributing a divine origin to this art, these ancient Semites emphasized the value which they placed upon it; and their descendants have not failed to follow the road traced by their ancestors. The debt which Western civilization owes to the nearer East is growing largely on our view, the more archæology and comparative research unravel the secrets of past ages. Two gifts of inestimable value we owe to the Semites. One is the expression in a tangible and intelligent form of our monotheistic *Weltanschauung*, out of which the three great world-religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have issued. The other is the alphabet, by means of which the thoughts and aspirations which lie at the basis of our modern Western culture have been propagated. But while the great religious systems which have come from the efforts of priests and prophets in ancient Palestine have had their counterpart in other important systems that had their birth in India and in China, the alphabet which Phœnicians and Aramæans invented has had a triumphant march as a means of commercial and intellectual intercourse amongst the most varied peoples. It seems probable that writing was invented in various and different parts of the globe, in Egypt, in China,

in America, as well as in ancient Babylonia. But none of the systems was destined to have the vogue acquired by that of the Semites, to become the parent also of the alphabets used by tongues so radically divergent as Indo-European, Mongolo-Tartar, and Malay.

In dealing with ancient peoples we are accustomed to use the term Literature with the greatest possible latitude. We include as such all that has come down to us of their writings, to whatever field of human activity they may refer. In this manner, Literature is no longer synonymous with *belles-lettres*, but may comprise treatises upon all possible subjects; including even business documents and social letters. In this use of the word there is, it is true, a certain justification, above and beyond that of mere archæological convenience. Among the Semites, the line of demarcation between everyday writing and that which is formal and literary has never been drawn clearly; just as little as definite forms of literary expression have been reserved for the treatment of certain subjects. Jews, Syrians, and Arabs would write grammatical treatises in verse; or, if need be, medical and legal ones. The passion for poetic diction was supreme; and where we would write an order in council or an official document in the ordinary, albeit twisted, style of official parlance, the Arab scribe will make it an occasion for the exercise of whatever ingenuity he may possess in the turning of happy phrases and the collocation of pleasing rhymes. But the purpose of the present presentation will be served best if the latitude in the use of the word Literature be restricted and the attempt be made to conform to the more usual acceptance of the term.

It is difficult, practically impossible, to give any general characterization of Semitic Literatures as a whole, for the reason that the historic and psychic development of the Semitic peoples has been so varied. It is true that the peoples which have produced these Literatures have kept their racial affinity intact to a surprising degree; and this despite

the many admixtures of foreign blood due to the practice of polygamy which has always been more or less indigenous in the East. But the history of the Semites covers so wide a period of time and traverses so extensive a part of the earth's surface, that it is impossible to find the psychologic unity of the whole race. From the oldest specimen of Babylonian Literature inscribed upon a stele of King Gudaca (which is dated at about 4000 B.C.), to the productions of modern Arabic writers in Cairo or of Hebrew literati in American ghettos, is a long hail. From Southern Mesopotamia into Western Asia, Northern Africa, Europe, and the cities of the American continent, the geographical distribution of Semitic peoples almost comes around a full circle. In their march through the world they have come in contact with many civilizations and peoples alien to them in race and in ideals. In many cases they were able to impress their own individuality upon these aliens, either by actual conquest or by the more durable influence of an imposing culture. The Babylonians, forced by their movement westward into the proximity of Egypt and the ancient civilizations of Crete and Asia Minor, knew how to impose their script and many of their religious ideas upon the whole of the nearer East which they conquered. In the early Middle Ages the Arabs did the same, carrying Asia into Europe, making the Mediterranean a propagator of Semitism, and by the force of their religious enthusiasm compelling the physical and mental submission of other races, Indians, Iranians, Egyptians, Berbers, and Goths. Alone among the important Semitic races, the Jews built up no great world-power; preferring to exist by the inner force of a long martyrdom and to exercise a spiritual influence by their presence everywhere as a theocratic people, and by giving to the world the two daughter faiths, Christianity and Islam. And they are the only Semitic people that have survived with a live and active conscience from the earliest times down to the present day!



Yet, whatever may be the influence exercised by Semitic peoples upon the world, and whatever may be the forces that have originated with them, they were themselves influenced by this world strongly and variously. The forces put out by the great culture-peoples of former times do not run in parallel lines, but intertwine and intermingle. That which goes forth as flood may return as an ebb-tide. No one people is exclusively the giver, no one entirely the receiver. The commerce of the human mind is like unto that of the body. The giver of to-day is the receiver of to-morrow. And so it has been with the Semites. Japheth has dwelt in the tents of Shem; but Shem, also, has not spurned the habitations of his brother. A good deal of the mythology of ancient Greece has its roots in the religious conceptions elaborated by Babylonian priests; many of the legends about the gods on Olympus have their origin in the stories told about Anu and Bel and Tammuz. But, in later times, Greece repaid its debt to the East, by giving it a philosophic terminology and the framework for a systematic theology. The whole Mohammedan and Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages, reaching back to that curious fusion of East and West in the Neo-Platonic Schools of Alexandria, is but an echo of the thoughts elaborated by Stoics and Peripatetics in ancient Hellas. Jewish tradition has the conceit that Plato and Aristotle imbibed wisdom at the feet of the Rabbis: a quaintly Eastern method of acknowledging this dependence. It is true that Babylonian astronomy and medicine and mathematics laid the basis for the labors of Ptolemæus, Galen, Hippocrates, and Euclid; but, at a later time, their works were translated into Eastern tongues and their names became household ones for Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic literati. In our own day modern Arabic and Hebrew *belles-lettres* are strongly under the influence of the great writers of Western Europe, and a great many of the works of Shakspere, Dante, Goethe, Racine, and Molière can be read in Semitic translations. It is these influences of the most

varied forces, historical, religious, philosophic, scientific, and literary, to which Semitic peoples have been subject which have produced the varying character that we see exhibited in Semitic Literatures.

Of all the literary forms in which mankind has clothed its thought and its feeling, one has been entirely wanting among the Semites. They have never developed a drama of their own. From time to time attempts have been made to vindicate for the Semitic people a sense of the beautiful inherent in dramatic presentation; notably in connection with some particular explanation of such books in our Bible as the "Song of Solomon" and the tragedy of Job. But, apart from the difficulties of exegesis inherent in this theory, no such claim has ever been made by the people itself out of whose loins these books have issued, and it is quite plain that they were never consciously intended to be put upon the stage. Nor have other Semitic peoples ever attempted to fill up the void. The Turkish *Karaköz* or Shadow-play, which of late years has made its way into Syria and Egypt, is of non-Semitic origin, and the attempt even to adapt Molière for the Egyptian stage has remained little more than a literary curiosity. There must be some reasons inherent in the development of Semitic culture that are opposed to the development of the drama, and which successfully withstood the infectious influence of the greatest dramatic influence which the world has seen. One is led to suppose, then, that the mythological element which is present to such a degree in the ancient drama has made it repellent to the austere monotheism of the Semites. It is true that the ancient Semites had their mythology as well as the ancient Greeks; that they deified their kings and humanized their gods. Babylonian religious culture is full of it. But even Babylonian religion, as it proceeded on the road from polytheism to henotheism, gradually sublimated these mythological elements. Traces of them, only, are to be found in our Bible; and the severe monotheism of later official

Judaism and Islam made short work with these vestiges. The naïve outlook upon the universe and its forces was gone; and with it went the power to discuss them even with playful seriousness. Nor must it be forgotten that in ancient Greece the stage was the pulpit from which the great lessons of life were preached to the multitude. The Jews had their prophets and teachers to do this work, Mohammedans their preachers and moralists. In this manner the need for a stage was not felt. In addition to this, the distinct dislike to represent the human figure in any form, though not itself strong enough to prevent artistic development in other directions, must have acted as a deterring restraint.

What has been said of the drama may, to a large extent, be said also of epic poetry. During one period only of their history, and that almost at its birth, have the Semites developed the tale of their supposed heroic times into an extended epic. The Babylonian story of the doings of the hero Gilgamesh, representing as it does certain astro-cosmological ideas transferred from heaven to earth, takes us back into the twilight of the gods; but it had no real life beyond the confines of that branch of the Semitic peoples in which it had its birth. A national or racial epic must deal with a "host of gods," or with such supernatural powers of human beings as bridge over the chasm that separates the human from the divine. But when the older "host of gods" became the "God of hosts," as it did for the writers of the Bible, the transcendence of the Deity beyond things mundane cut the very heart out of all such fanciful musings. Jehovah, as very spirit, must deal with his people in other ways. Heaven was filled with angels that did his bidding, and saintly men on earth received direct messages to mankind. Ethical monotheism could not deal playfully with the great problems of the world, and the beautiful had once more to stand aside before the moral. It is true that many of the events narrated in the epic of Gilgamesh have filtered down Semitic tradition and have found their way

into both Bible and Koran. But they are embedded there mainly as fossils; reminiscent, it is true, of an earlier life, but hardly forming an integral part of later Semitic religious concepts. Many traits in the stories of the patriarchs, such figures as those of Moses, the man of God, of Samson, the man of strength, of Solomon, the king of wisdom, of Daniel, the man of judgment, lie clearly upon the border line of mythology. So does the figure of Alexander the Great in Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic folk-tale. "He of the Two-Horns" is only a later reflection of the ancient Gilgamesh; and the figure of the old Babylonian hero lingers on down to our own day, when it has found its most permanent artistic expression in Michael Angelo's two-horned Moses in San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. But no great epic has grown up around the exploits of any of these heroes; and no great influence was there to promote the writing of epic poetry. When the heroic period of Jewish history was finished, the life of the people had already become one of pain and of sorrow. Their thoughts were sad and severe, as their life was hard and often unlovely. Nor were conditions among other Semitic peoples such as to favor the growth of epic poetry. The non-Jewish Semites of Syria and Mesopotamia developed into Christian churches, to whom matters of church government and the minutiae of belief primed all other considerations. Islam was born into a world that had already outgrown the stage of innocent fancy in its outlook upon the universe. It had no childhood days, but was called at once to the serious tasks of man's estate. It had to fight its way and develop in an upward struggle against civilizations that had already passed their zenith. It came too early into contact with city life; and the fresh air of the desert was soon befouled in the atmosphere of the market-place.

It is from the desert that the Semite has sprung; and every new development, every great effort has had its origin there. Not without reason did the Hebrews imagine that their life

in the wilderness was the pre-qualification for their entrance into the Holy Land of promise. All the great movements in Islamic history have been engendered and nourished in the desert, from the time of Mohammed himself down to that of the modern Wahebis, Mahdists, and Senoussis. The desert has conserved the pure joy of living, and though it has trained its dwellers to hardiness of body and firmness of purpose, it has at the same time preserved in them a simplicity of mind. It is these characteristics that have enabled the Arabian desert to produce the only other Semitic epic of which we have any knowledge. The exploits of the black hero Antara, his deeds of prowess and his magnanimity may be heard to-day in prose and verse as one sits to coffee in Cairo, Alexandria, or Beirut. But, though told in the city, they breathe the true air and spirit of the desert. And, though pitched in a minor key and entirely free from every supernatural admixture, they are truly epic in character, as they depict all the virtues dear to the roving spirit of the Arab, intrepidity, courage, and hospitality.

It is in lyric poetry that the Semitic muse has found its fullest literary expression. A great deal of this poetry is, it is true, religious in character, because religion has played so large a part in the life of Semitic peoples. But, from time to time, secular poetry has been cultivated as well. Whether such secular poetry ever existed in ancient Babylonia and Syria, we cannot tell. Whatever has come down to us engraved upon clay tablets is in the form of prayers, of psalms, and of litanies, expressive entirely of the higher aspirations of the people, or of their fears of evil that could be warded off only by the right word spoken at the proper moment. That this poetry affects the style, known to Egyptian and early Hebrew Literature, called *parallelismus membrorum*, in which the clauses of a verse bear a definite relation to each other, is certain. Whether it passed beyond that and attained to an accentuating rhythm has not yet been proven. But some of

the psalms indited by these priests and singers of long ago reveal a depth of feeling, a consciousness of sin, and a burning desire for forgiveness, that place them side by side with the noblest productions of the ancient Hebrew Muse and the religious writings of the prophets. It is, therefore, evident that the psalmists and prophets of the Bible do not stand altogether alone as the unique product of a single branch of the Semitic family. They and their work were part and parcel of the great Semitic tradition, under the ban of which stood the whole of Western Asia from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

And yet Hebrew poetry has certain characteristics which single it out for special comment. It is the form in which a good deal of our Bible has been written, and in this manner it has acquired for us a peculiar meaning and significance. To write poetry, religious or secular, never became the prerogative of a single class; priests, prophets, and laymen all made use of it to express their inmost feelings. Nor has it ever lost the freshness of its source during the long vista of years that stretches from the earliest writings to be found in the Bible down to the present day. Like those whose thoughts its words expressed, it has suffered the contact of all the forces to which they have been exposed and in which they have been molded successively. Yet, it has remained substantially the same. At first, it is the naïve and untrammelled expression of a semi-agricultural people, with its songs of the well, its rough poems of victory, its laments over fallen heroes, its love-songs put into the mouth of an idealized king. In the service of Faith, it is enthroned in hymns for public service or for private use, in adorations, prayers, and supplications. It takes the message of the human heart in all its manifold changes and wings them heavenward. It bespeaks the sorrow of the sin-laden individual or of the community bowed down in public grief. During the Middle Ages it comes under the influence of its Arabic peers. It adopts the whole outward

form of its more fortunate brother. In modern times it must perforce take on a modern dress; and the great Italian, English, German, and French poets become its models. During the Biblical period the form is rugged, the license with which the poet moves is great; so much so that even to this day and despite the many theories that have been put forward, the proper scanning of Biblical verse, if there is any such scanning, is still unknown. In the Arabic period it is the *Kasidah* that holds sway, and the old tongue is forced to sing in Arabic metres. After the Reformation, canto, *terzett*, and hexameter exert their influence; and our Hebrew poets of to-day—for the ancient tongue has never died out—have a freedom of expression and a privilege to develop the language which their forbears would have envied. Yet, throughout all, it is the same noble language of the Bible that speaks and sings, the same simple constructions that please and fascinate. It is true that a great deal of Israel's post-Biblical poetry is of a purely religious character; religion, up to recent times, was the all in all to those that sang and to those that listened. But in Spain and in modern times, these exclusive fetters have been cast off. Love and wine and the lighter moments of human existence found expression also. Hebrew was not only a church language; it was the medium of intercourse between the scattered members of the Jewish people, and almost the only means by which they expressed thought and feeling.

Unfortunately, this cannot be said of the literary development of Oriental Christians. But those living in Syria and Mesopotamia, and the later converts in the highlands of Ethiopia, have produced a large, and in some ways an important body of Literature. The first of these, the most prominent survival of the Aramaic race, preserved its language merely as a Church tongue. The Arabic invasion in the seventh century did not only level all political distinctions; it routed, also, the civilizations with which it came in contact,

after having taken from them those elements that it lacked itself. In addition, it drove the tongues in which these civilizations were articulate out of the highways and byways into remote regions and mountain fastnesses. Many Persian-speaking districts in the eastern part of the Califate gave way to the language of the desert, just as in the far West the Gothic tongue of Spain was supplanted by that of the conquering Arabs. In the same manner, within a hundred years after the entrance of the Arabs into Syria and Mesopotamia, the Syriac language had ceased to exist as a language of the people and had taken refuge in the hills of the Anti-Lebanon, in the mountains of the Kurdistan and in far-off Azerbaijan, in which places it is still spoken by remnants of Aramæan peoples. Apart, then, from a few folk-poems and village songs, Syriac poetry, in the main, is of a religious character. Despite a certain formality and stiffness, and up to the time when it made way for the Arabic, it has produced some poets of real merit, such as Saint Ephrahn, Isaac of Antioch, Jacob of Serug; but the range in which even they allowed their poetic feeling to wander is constrained. The lighter touch that comes from living in and with the world is wanting; the odor of the cloister and of the monk's cell pervades it all. The same is true, only in a much wider degree, of Ethiopic poetry. The written language was a creation of the Church; and whatever need was felt to express feelings in versified form kept to the end the impress of this origin.

In addition to the Hebrews, the Arabs are the only Semitic people of consequence that have developed the art of literary expression untrammelled by the fetters of a church. They are the only ones that have lived in the invigorating air of a national home, and that have developed the full life of a people conscious of its strength. The evident result of this is seen in their rich and many-sided Literature and in the great mass of lyric poetry they have produced. Some innate love for poetic diction must have been ingrained in the very nature of



the Arab. For even before the art of writing had been developed among these roving spirits of the desert, the tribal bard sang of his love, of his chase, and of his camel. Even in the desert, where the art of living even is difficult and comfort is wanting, where the possession of a flock means riches and a few extra tents ease and contentment, the poet was an uncrowned king. A phrase beautifully turned was enough to put aside the wrath of the powerful; a few rhymes aptly strung could dominate the uncontrolled spirit of a Beduin chieftain. And even when the Beduin turned into the denizen of the city, and when the tribal chief became the calif and the sultan of a more or less organized community, the love of happy diction retained its ascendancy. The poet was not less honored in the palaces of Damascus, of Bagdad, and of Cordova than he was around the fire of a desert encampment. But the home and the well-spring of poetic expression still remained the pure air of the great sand sea; and eminent philologists even, in their search for the hidden meanings of obsolete words or for the correct use of certain expressions, were accustomed to send for information to some desert tribe. Mohammed himself was quite afraid of the power of the poets; and in consigning them to the lowest limbo of Purgatory, silently acknowledged the power they wielded. The stream of poetic composition has flowed on uninterruptedly from those early times down to the present day.

The form in which the Arabs write their poetry is that of a quantitative meter, each line consisting of two equal halves, the first pair rhyming and the same rhyme being kept throughout the poem at the end of the second half of the line. It might be thought that this exigency of rhyme would stultify and formalize poetic effort; but so supple is the Arabic tongue, and so extensive is the Arabic vocabulary, that the danger was most happily avoided. Arabic verse never descends to mere rhyming alliteration. At an early period meter became greatly diversified, the schoolmen laying down six-

teen different ones as canonical. Popular poetry, however, continued to develop these forms and to add to their number. It became the custom to open the poem, or *Kasidah*, as it was termed, with a true desert scene, a view of the vestiges of the camp left by the tribe of which the loved maiden was a member. This is followed by a description of the desert beauty and an account of the poet's own prowess, intermingled with a detailed picture of his camel and his daily life. This classical form of the *Kasidah* did not, however, become quite stereotyped. The true poetic spirit outbalanced the influence towards conventionality. When the petty court at Al-Hirah and the larger one at Damascus brought the Beduin Arab into a wider circle of life, he began to sing of other themes; or, at least, to give a heightened color to former ones. Persian influences at Al-Hirah, Byzantine ones at Damascus, developed his innate love for the charms of poetry. At Damascus, also, the comparative luxuriousness of life introduced that sensual element which must in a measure color all true art. The Court of the Umayyids became a center where Literature was prized, and minnesingers vied for applause and for more substantial gifts. Not pietistic, and yet good Mohammedans, the Syrian califs were not averse to the chase, and to wine, and to physical beauty; and their court poets put their masters' feelings into verse. Few singers of love have equaled Omar ibn Abi Rabi'a; few have contended with each other in biting satire as did Jarir and Farozdak. There were Christian poets, as Al-Ahtal, and female ones, as Lailah and al-Khansa. At Bagdad, and under the Abbasides, the horizon of the poet was still further widened. The influence of Persian mysticism became more pronounced, the wealth of imagery more abundant, and court poets dogged the footsteps of Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun. Even the sultanlets of Mesopotamian principalities followed the lead of their greater masters. It was at the Court of Hamdanite Saif al-Daulah in Aleppo (948) that al-Mutanabbi lived, who developed to

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the utmost the possibilities of the old Arabic Kasidah and thus marks the end of the classical period of Arabic poetry.

Nor were the Mohammedan powers that were further removed from the heart of the Empire less expressive of their love for the rhyming word. Mohammedan Egypt and Mohammedan Spain have also produced their poets; but these poets were bound less securely by the bonds of tradition, and they favored the introduction of new and more popular metrical forms. The old Kasidah, with its set meters, made way for the Muwashshah, the strophic poem, and for the Zajal, a sort of *ottave rime*, probably under the influence of non-Arabic surroundings.

Finally, the love of the Arab for his national poetry is seen also in the care which he took to preserve it. During the second and third centuries of the Hijrah many collections were commenced which were to treasure up the productions of the Arab muse for the enjoyment of future generations. These collections were made in various ways; the poems written by members of a single tribe were gathered together, or those dealing with a single subject; or those poems which were considered to be the most remarkable from one or the other point of view were brought together, and in course of time anthologies grew up in which all manner of virtues and vices received their meed of praise and blame at the hands of the most noted poets.

There is one form of literary expression which deserves special mention; for the Arab has cultivated it to a surprising degree, and he has found imitators among other Semitic peoples. I refer to rhymed prose, that elevated diction which stands upon the border line between prose and poetry, and in which the individual prose phrases are held together by the rhyme. The excessive value in which it was held by the Arabs is, no doubt, due to the fact that it was employed largely by Mohammed in his Koran. From here it passed to the religious preachers who, in the gatherings of the faithful

on Fridays, intercalated it into their Khutbahs. From the preachers it passed to the official scribes and secretaries, and from them into general Literature. Poets and poetasters, historians and biographers, easily fell into the groove, and the preface to nearly every Arabic book bears witness to the delight of the Arab for assonance and rhyme. As pure Literature it has found its highest expression in the Makamahs of al-Hamadani and al-Hariri, those fine examples of the literary tale, where the plot is nothing more than a series of pegs upon which to hang all the evidence of the richness of the Arabic vocabulary and the ingenuity of the author. A good imitation of al-Hariri is to be found in the Hebrew Makamahs of al-Harizi; a less literary but still more ingenious copy in those of the Syriac writer Ebed Yesu.

This tendency to rhymed prose and to alliteration marks the charm of Semitic prose-writing in general. If we add to this a certain stateliness and grandeur, we can understand the attraction it has always had for the Western ear. All of these characteristics are very evident in the prose of the Bible. It is these characteristics that have led noted scholars to imagine that some metrical scheme must lie at the base even of the stories contained in the Book of Genesis. Unfortunately, this grandeur and this alliteration are not always apparent in our translations of the Bible. The simplicity of Hebrew constructions is apt to become monotonous in a modern tongue; the alliterations and assonances are easily lost, and the peculiar cadences refuse reproduction. One has to read in the original the simple stories of the patriarchs, the tales of the wars for Jehovah's sake, the descriptions of the glories of kings and princes, in order to appreciate their full literary value.

It is generally thought that Hebrew Literature ended with the final canonization of the Bible as the Book of the Jewish Church. We have already seen that this was not the case as regards poetry. It was still less so in the case of prose. It is

true that other languages forced themselves upon the Jews as a means of daily intercourse. Already in late Biblical times this was true of Aramaic; but though prose and poetry were written in this sister dialect both within the Synagogue and without, Hebrew maintained its place as a literary language of the people. Nearly all the so-called apocryphal writings were originally in Hebrew, and perhaps some parts of the New Testament. In the Talmuds and in the homiletic Literature of the Talmudic period (the Midrashim), we find a mixture of the two dialects, a cross between the literary Hebrew and the more popular Aramaic. But all through the Middle Ages and down to our own day, we have a long line of writers in Hebrew upon all conceivable subjects: history, biography, linguistics, ethics, and especially theology and casuistry; until, in modern times, the printing-press and the newspaper speak to us in a language derived directly from that in which the prophets of old delivered their harangues. And, at the present, from being the language of learned intercourse and of literary expression, Hebrew bids fair to have a new lease of life in the Holy Land as the tongue of a reconstituted people.

No such revived life awaits the Syriac. Its place has been taken by Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. Syriac has remained purely a Church language. It produces no Literature to-day, and even in the Church service its days are numbered. Whatever prose works it produced down to the thirteenth century, when production practically ceased, are with very few exceptions of a religious character or deal with religious subjects. There is much that is noble in the homilies and sermons and Bible commentaries composed by Nestorian and Jacobite ecclesiastics. The Holy Ephraem, Philoxenus of Mabry, and Jacob Burdeana, in their various writings, show us what expression the Syriac language is capable of when it is pure at its source and undefiled; while the numerous Acts of the Martyrs, the Histories of holy men, the Romances of Addai and the

Christ, of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, and of the Emperor Julian are sufficient evidence that imagination was not wanting even in the cell of the monk and the study of the cloister. But there was an additional reason that prevented Syriac Literature from flowing unobstructed in channels of its own. We have seen that it was held within strict limits by Church and religious tradition. Its development was also retarded by the fascinating influence of Greek wisdom. In the late Greek schools of Syria and Mesopotamia, both Nestorian and Jacobite clerics had become acquainted with Greek Literature and with Greek Science. Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, to mention only a few, represented to them the great outside world and satisfied their natural longing for a wider and a more comprehensive knowledge. They translated many of the great works of Greek thinkers into their own Syriac and followed this up with similar renderings of Greek historical and Church writings. Later Syriac Literature is thus in the thralldom of a foreign bondage. Caught between the Church and Hellas, all initiative was driven out. But even as a Literature of translation it rendered two noble services to the world of thought and to Literature. It was the stepping-stone on which Eastern imagery passed over from Asia into Europe. The Panchatantra, or Fables of Bidpai, was translated from the Pahlavi by Syriac-speaking monks; from Syriac into Arabic and Hebrew, and from Hebrew into the various languages of modern Europe, providing entertainment and enjoyment wherever it went. It was the same with the great Sagirite. Middle Age Europe would have known little of this tremendous mind, and both Jewish and Mohammedan thought would have remained without the terminology with which they were able to turn their theology into a religious philosophy, had not these translators into Syriac made the "Organon" and other similar works available to the Oriental mind.

We have seen that Arabic rhymed prose had its origin in the

Koran. The ordinary prose of the Arabs had a similar beginning. In the wonderful development of Islam, few elements are more surprising than the influence exerted by its founder in almost all the walks of life. Great teachers had existed before him who had founded religious and ethical systems to which millions of human beings have given their adhesion. They have been the great central fire from which later times have drawn their inspiration. But in none of the great systems has the influence of one man been so all-pervading as has that of Mohammed, the Arabian prophet. Religion, ethics, law, social and political science, all these, as far as Mohammedans are concerned, are based upon what he is believed to have said and to have done. It was also his boast that he had given to his people a Bible and that he had raised them to the position of lettered folk, on a par with "the people of a Book," as Jews and Christians were called. In the Koran, Arabic prose was put to writing for the first time. It was Mohammed who commenced to fix definitely for his people the supposed history of the past and to transmit in literary form the legends about their predecessors which they had heard from their neighbors. It is true that he had parametric ends in view. But, in doing so, he excited an interest in the past that was destined never to wane again. In opposition to the poets, he gave a literary value to prose which it had not previously possessed. His example was followed in this matter also. The poets continued to sing of the valiant deeds of their tribesmen; but, in putting their poems into writing, they or others did not now scruple to prefix to the poetry a prose description of the events and persons concerned. In this manner Arabic historiography was born. A long line of annalists and historians testify to the worthy interest these men and their readers had in their own history and in that of their neighbors. Mohammedanism was born in the full light of day, and its historians, more than those of any other people or religious body, have collected the materials

which permit us to look into every nook and corner of their manifold doings. It would be useless to mention the names of these many writers, from the great biographer of the prophet, Ibn Ishak (733), and the excellent annalist, al-Tabari (738), down to the first philosopher of history, Ibn Khaldûn (1332). Each division of the various Mohammedan empires has its own historians; each country and each principal city. The lives of its great men are told in innumerable biographies; and the science of geography aided an understanding of the surroundings in which the events narrated took place.

All this was done, not only with a view to the permanent fixing of historical tradition, but also with a taste for literary expression. This same taste is shown in the many books written by Arabs and denominated "Adab" or polite literature, in which, with a mixture of prose and poetry, stories, witty sayings, curious traits, commendable virtues, and reprehensible faults, were collected and illustrated, and in this way an antidote was given to the rough and ready pothouse tales told by the professional story-teller. Of these latter, the most noted are, of course, those comprised within the cycle of the "Thousand Nights and a Night." To most Westerners these Boccaccian tales represent the quintessence of the ability of Arabic litterateurs. But they convey a most erroneous impression of what that ability really was. The "Arabian Nights" have never been looked upon as Literature by the Arabs themselves. They represent the gossip of the club; ribald tales which one may tell over drink or food, but which are not deserving of a place by the side of the great masterpieces. They are not even a faithful picture of real Arab life as are the romances of Antar, of the Banu Hilal, or Saif dhu al-Yazan. They are the unhealthy product of the close city life, not of the clear air of the desert; an imitation only, built up on the basis of the Persian "Thousand Days" and reeking of the filth of Bagdad and Cairo. Unfortunately Galland and Lane, Weil, Knight, and Burton have given



them a vogue in the West, which they have never enjoyed in the East itself.

Unfortunately, the West has never fully understood the East, nor has it understood the debt that it owes to its earlier sister. In the Mediterranean area the commingling of the two has gone on from the earliest times. The deeper becomes the study of the ancient world-powers in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, the firmer does the conviction grow that the beginnings of our Art, our Architecture, and our Literature are to be found there. In that region we must look for the beginnings of much Greek mythology. Many ideas made prominent in Greek philosophy had their origin in Babylonian conceptions. If the East was hellenized under Alexander the Great and his followers, many elements of culture were brought back into Europe. But the chief glory of the Semites lies in the fact that they have produced two great books, and have given Bibles to two of the great religious factors in the development of the medieval and modern world. I have already spoken of the Koran. As a book of holy traditions and religious exhortations, it has been and is the center around which nearly three hundred millions of mankind gather. As a masterpiece of the world's Literature, it has inspired a large and an important following, and even we of to-day can still feel the elemental force of its power and the grandeur of the simple efforts towards the divine which it contains.

What, then, are we to say of *our* Bible and of its influence? If we look at it simply from the religious point of view, it is clear that this influence cannot be fully measured. It has driven whole peoples to greatest and noblest efforts. It has been a joy to those glad of heart and a comfort to them that sit in darkness. But its literary influence has been almost as strong as has been its religious importance. It has not only molded later Hebrew Literature and inspired singers and writers in that ancient tongue; even in translation its influence has been world-wide. Modern German Literature takes

its rise with Luther's translation. No man of Western origin understood it better than did the great German reformer. No one has reproduced its spirit in a modern tongue better than he has. And in our own English Literature, what monument has been of more lasting endurance than the noble version made by the divines of King James? How much of our later Literature takes its inspiration from that version! How much of our song is but the echo of its sacred pages? Were it only for this gift of the spirit and of the pen, our gratitude should be eternal to those who wrote and who treasured up these highest aspirations of the human soul.



### III

## THE LITERATURE OF INDIA AND PERSIA

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LANGUAGES

### I

WHEN one has caught the first glimpses of the Northern Indian dawn from the heights of the Khaibar Pass, and has watched from the top of Adam's Peak the splendor of an Eastern day sweep out of the sea that laves Ceylon, or has seen the bright stars of the long caravan night grow pale before the gorgeous crimson of the herald morn in Persia, one catches some of the fire, the ruddy glow, that belongs to the Crimson East. True, this may not be conducive to justice of judgment or accuracy of cold criticism, yet it inspires one with an enthusiasm for those lands of the dawning sun, and helps toward a better understanding and truer appreciation of the Literatures of India and Iran — a sympathy which I hope you may in a manner share.

The history of these two cousin realms, India and Persia, covers a period of more than three millenniums, and is spread over a territory of many thousand miles. To crowd such widespread bounds of time and space into the compass of less than an hour is a task indeed, and will require generous indulgence and leniency on the part of the auditor when making a final estimate of the accomplishment.

India and Persia, each in its way, represent the oldest types of Aryan civilization and the most ancient form of Indo-European Literature. The morning stars sang together when

poetry was born in these distant lands, and poesy's youthful voice was first lifted in a sacred hymn of praise, alike in the region of the Indus and the Ganges and in the realm of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The story of a religious beginning is the same in both, and we may trace the historic development of each in turn.

The melody of India's voice broke forth earliest in a chant. It was the anthem of the Brahman priest praising the divine powers of nature personified in the sacred hymns of the Vedas. The Rîg, the earliest of the four Vedas, comprises a thousand hymns, almost every one of which is a religious lyric in form and expression. These hymns are not mere primitive outpourings of the human soul, as they were once thought to be; they are finished poems, carefully wrought, and associated with the sacrifices conducted by the priests of old. As the anthem proceeds we behold, one after another, the gods of the Vedic host rising before our vision. It is now Agni, the god of fire, as the heavenly messenger carrying the oblation from the altar to the divine beings above. Next, Indra, the storm-god, marshaling the warring elements of the sky against the demon of drought in the form of a dragon, whom he slays with the lightning, and thus lets loose the pent-up rains to revive the parched lands dying of thirst. Or it may be the Sun, the Moon, or the Morning and the Evening Star, that receive their meed of praise and thanksgiving. Sometimes the prayer is for victory, long life, children, happiness. Not infrequently the petition has some baser end in view — the gaining of riches in cattle, or some minor boon — vital to the suppliant, no doubt, but unworthy in our eyes to-day. A few of these hymns, but very few, and they are late, are mere panegyrics of patrons; and some are purely didactic. One entire book, the ninth, religious in its tone, is devoted to the laudation of the soma-plant, the ancient Persian *haoma*, from which the Indo-Iranians extracted the sacred drink that played so large a part in their sacrifices. The tenth, or last, book includes a long

wedding anthem, several hymns for the funeral ritual, a song of creation, a cosmogonic hymn, and some poems which show the earliest beginnings of Hindu speculative thought and possess a loftiness of concept that commands respect even from the most advanced philosophy to-day.

All the hymns—*sūktas*, 'well-spoken compositions,' they are called—are written in polished verse, with a considerable variety of meters and diversity of style. Some of them may antedate 1500 B.C. in time of composition; none can be later than 1000 B.C. according to the opinion of scholars best competent to judge.

The noblest of the early hymns are the few addressed to Varuna, a supersensuous, transcendental being, who rules the world from his supernal realm of heaven, and who originally represented the all-embracing sky. Some of the stanzas that are reverently lifted towards the far-distant abode of this celestial monarch almost approach the majesty of the Psalms. This is especially true of some stanzas in one of the hymns in the Atharva collection, the fourth of the Vedas, magnifying the omniscience and omnipresence of this divine being, in a style not elsewhere matched in Vedic Literature:—

"This earth is all King Varuna's possession,  
And yonder lofty sky with boundaries distant,  
The ocean's twain are but the loins of Varun,  
Yet in the tiniest drop he lieth hidden.

"What though one flee beyond the farthest heaven  
One could not even there escape King Varun,  
His spies come hither forth from out of heaven,  
With all their thousand eyes the earth surveying.

"King Varuna discerns all this that lieth  
Between the firmaments and that beyond them,  
The very winkings of men's eyes are numbered,  
He reckons all, as doth the dice a player."

And again from the Rig: —

“ Whatever be, O Varuna, the trespass  
Which we as men do 'gainst the race of heaven,  
When heedlessly we violate thy statutes,  
Chastise us not, O God, for that transgression.”

The hymns, however, which have the greatest literary interest in the whole collection, perhaps because they are richest in fancy, are the twenty addressed to Ushas, the goddess of the dawn, who corresponds to the Eos of the Greeks and the Aurora of the Romans. The sunrise splendors of Northern Hindustan, more gorgeous than almost anywhere else in the world, stirred the hearts of the early Rishis, or Vedic bards, with a throb that burst from their lips in lyric song well-nigh unequalled in the religious lyrics of any other people. Ushas, the damsel fair, born of the sky, twin sister of the night, flees before the light of her lover, the sun, who pursues her across the heavens. Often she plays the part of a coquette as she throws her garb of darkness aside and arrays herself in robes of splendor. The verse weaves itself into a myriad similes as it moves along: —

“The bringer of glad joys shines out resplendent,  
Wide unto us she throws the portals open,  
Arousing all the world she shows us riches;  
The dawn hath wakened every living creature.

“This daughter of the sky comes on our vision,  
Refulgent maiden clad in shining raiment,  
Princess of all the earth's goodly possessions,  
O Dawn auspicious, shine thou to-day upon us.”

And yet, amid all this brilliancy and splendor, a somber tone, a note of sadness comes in, the mingling of the vox humana with the vox seraphica in the lyric cry: —

"Gone and departed now are all those mortals  
 Who looked of old upon the Dawn so radiant;  
 To-day she is beheld by us now living —  
 But those are coming who will see her later."

It must not be supposed, however, that the sentimental note is a dominant one in the Rig-Veda. A sound and wholesome tone pervades the entire collection; and occasionally this takes the form of gentle humor or mild sarcasm, good-natured satire or didactic ridicule. Thus, in one instance, the bard intimates that whatever be the calling or station in life, whether priest, doctor, carpenter, or what-not, all men are after money; it is the same everywhere; and he concludes his jingle in a light-hearted vein that is quite modern: —

"Poet am I; Papa's a quack,  
 Mama the upper millstone turns;  
 Whate'er our aims — like chasing cows —  
 We all are hunting after wealth."

Quite up-to-date for three thousand years ago!

The swift march of time does not allow me to attempt a characterization of the other three Vedas. *Ab uno disce omnes*. But were I to do so, I should not claim them as rivals for the Rig in literary excellence.

Still less could I make plea for that body of explanatory works known as Brahmanas, which were composed after the era of early Vedic creation had ceased, and which seem to elucidate the hymns by legendary and traditional matter. Even less strong would be my appeal in the case of those strings of rules called Sutras, "Threads," that were twined about the ritual which had now grown up around both Vedas and Brahmanas. These Sutras and Brahmanas served, it is thought, to carry the Vedic age forward for five or six hundred years, so that they cover a period ranging presumably from 1000 to 400 B.C. Neither of them, however, can make any pre-



tense to literary qualities. The Brahmana writings are usually spoken of as stupid, silly, inane. The crabbed Sutras, mere formulas to give the rules for the ancient rites and observances, have about the same artistic value as an algebraic formula. Nevertheless, they both have one special interest; they are both written in prose and thus furnish, so far as the Brāhmanas go, the earliest examples of prose literature that exist in any Indo-European Literature. The short, choppy sentences of their childish babble are crude enough, it must be confessed, and yet they are often full of fancy. Here is one, the "Legend of the Origin of Night and Day" in the time of primitive man, when Yama and his sister Yami were the first beings on earth. I translate the brief narrative nearly literally, so as to preserve the abrupt sentences of the crude style; it is rough enough, but all the imaginative element is there !

"Now Yama died. The gods sought to comfort Yami. When they asked her she responded : 'It was to-day he died.' The gods then said, 'Verily if this goes on she will never forget him.' Now up to that time there had been day only, not night. The gods created night. Then came the morrow. Then she began to forget him. Hence they say : 'Tis days and nights make us forget our sorrow."

The fact that the beginnings of Hindu philosophy are to be sought in the Veda has already been intimated; the fact also that philosophy can be treated poetically (Pope tried it in his "Essay on Man") is proved by the Sanskrit Upanishads, the oldest philosophical treatises, as a whole, in Indian Literature. Numbering some two hundred, these speculative writings cover a long period of time, running back to the sixth century B.C. or earlier, although the latest of them, mere sectarian tracts written even after the Mohammedan conquest of India, may come down as late as 1000 A.D. The oldest of these documents best illustrate the early stages of pantheistic speculation which subsequently developed into the six recognized systems of Hindu philosophy. In matter of style the

Upanishads are principally composed in verse, but some are in prose or contain prose. Yet, just as Plato's prose is the prose of a poet-philosopher, so they rise at times fully to the standard of recognized Literature, especially in their visualized images of the individual soul merging into the All-Soul which gave it birth, or when the phantasmagoria of the world sink into the real background of non-phenomenal existence, and the fitful dream of unreality gives place to the dreamless sleep of the real. To indicate what influence these philosophic productions have had upon the Occident I need only refer to Schopenhauer, who found the Upanishads his solace in life and his consolation in death, or allude to the writings of our own Emerson.

The calm and serene speculation of the Upanishads gives place to the stirring action of the two great epic poems of India, the "Mahabharata" and the "Ramayana."

The "Mahabharata," sometimes called the "Iliad of India," is an epic tale of the great war between two rival and related families, which brought the whole of Aryan India into a fatal feud. In compass the monstrous poem is nearly eight times as large as the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" taken together, since it contains two hundred thousand verses. The noble Arjuna, a perfect type of knighthood, is its Achilles; the god-born Karna is its Hector; and the martial Yudhishtira, leader of the hosts, its Agamemnon. Yet there the likeness between the huge epic and the Grecian masterpiece practically ends.

Notwithstanding its unwieldy length the "Mahabharata" has the quality of a true national epic. Its stirring scenes, its deeds of heroism and valor in the fateful battle of eighteen days that forms the crisis of the epic, its situations full of chivalry and courage, and its episodes full of love, tenderness, and devotion, of pathos and despair, are literary masterpieces when taken by themselves, and show the human heart stirred to the bottom. Some of the scenes, like those following the night of slaughter, with the lamentation of the women over the

dead, and the spectral images that rise before the view, would require strains inexpressibly grand — the genius of a Wagner — to give them a tone if set to music; and the final apotheosis of the heroic figures of the poem, as they ascend to heaven, forms a fitting close to this noble epic, voluminous and vast. The fault of the work, in Western eyes, is its enormous length; the *Μηδεια δγαν* of the Greeks was not known to the Indian redactors, or final redactor, who wove those ancient Hindu rhapsodies of the past into a giant national poem, and brought the national epic into its present form.

The other epic, the “Ramayana,” or wanderings of the hero Rama, is a more artificial epic as opposed to the folk-epic of India, and represents the true type of a long romantic poem. Unlike the “Mahabharata,” which grew out of old rhapsodies, the “Ramayana” is largely the work of a single author, Valmiki, who blazed out the path for many of the artistic devices that became standards in later Indian Literature, and whom we can, perhaps, date about 500 B.C. The wanderings of the hero Rama, cheated of his throne and banished with his faithful wife Sita, form the theme of the epic. The romance and pathos deepen when the devoted Sita is forcibly carried away by a demon-king to the uttermost bounds of Ceylon in the south. Then comes the adventurous element, when the monkeys of Southern India, the aboriginal population in the guise of monkeys, join hands with the distracted hero in the war to recover his wife. Virtue and right triumph at last, and Sita is ultimately restored to her lord.

From its plot the “Ramayana” is sometimes called the “Odyssey of India,” but the parallel is only a distant one; closer analogies in some of its parts might perhaps be found in legends connected with King Arthur, like whom Rama stands as a hero *sans peur et sans reproche*. Judged from a literary standpoint, the poem suffers, like its companion-piece, from its great length, nearly fifty thousand verses. It has, however, marked literary merit, and many of its episodes and

descriptions are full of beauty. The poem fulfils yet another mission, it is a great moral teacher for the youth of India, in whose eyes Rama is the prince ideal and his beloved Sita the nonpareil of wifely devotion.

At the very time when the orthodox Brahmanical Literature was being developed in the Sanskrit epics, a dialectic Literature in Pali, the sacred language of the Buddhists, was taking shape and entering upon that long literary life which was to extend from the sixth century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. To speak critically, it must be acknowledged that most of the productions of this quasi-Indian Protestantism are not Literature, judged from the esthetic standpoint, forbidding as they are by their schematic formalism, their endless repetitions, and their didactic tone. Nevertheless, it must in fairness be emphasized that such a work as the "Dhammapada," a book of moral maxims and sententious virtue, — if virtue can be reduced to aphorisms, — presents its religious teaching with rare strength and beauty. The Pali "Jatakas," moreover, or stories of Buddha's successive births, contain an immensely interesting mass of folklore in their entertaining accounts of Buddha's earlier incarnations in both human and animal form; and in them we have the beginning of the beast fable for which India is renowned.

It was out of the Sanskrit animal fables that a new branch of Literature was actually developed in Europe, as represented earliest by the works of Æsop and Babrius, though some authorities still refuse assent to this view. Story-telling under the guise of animal tales was admirably developed among the Hindus from the earliest times. The five books of the Sanskrit "Pancatantra," and its successor, the "Hitopades'a," or "Book of Good Counsel," if we translate its title, stand as the culmination of this style of fiction. The student of comparative literature knows that the fascinating collection of apologues in the Pancatantra was translated into Pahlavi, the Persian of the sixth century of our era and thence into Syr-

iac, in the same century, and into Arabic in the eighth. From this latter version later renderings were made and found their way into Europe. There was a Greek translation in the twelfth century, a Hebrew and a Latin version in the thirteenth, and finally a German translation of the latter in the fifteenth, century, which ultimately passed into the French of La Fontaine. The narrative of the development is briefly told by a mere mention of the names, "Kalilah and Dimnah," "Bidpah or Pilpay," the "Directorium Humanæ Vitæ," and "Das Buch der Byspel der alten Wysen." Scores of illustrations stand ready at hand to show this evolution. I need only recall to your mind the story of the girl who counted her chickens before they were hatched, or the milkmaid who built castles in the air before her milk reached market, or the Brahman who married a wife in fancy before the rice in his bowl found a purchaser. Let me summarize this latter one.

There the Brahman sat with the bowl of rice before him, and he looked at it and thought what fine rice it was, and how he should charge a good price for it. And then he began to plan what he would do with his money. He decided in his mind that he would marry, that he would even have four wives, and that the youngest and prettiest of them he would love the best. And he dreamed on and on, and thought that perhaps one of the other wives might make him angry, and that if he got angry he would kick her, and he kicked out, and over went his bowl of rice.

This is but a single instance of scores of these long literary wanderings.

The next development of importance in Sanskrit Literature is one upon which I would lay especial stress. I refer to the Indian drama. This is considered by most scholars to be independent of outside influence, for the theory that the Greek stage influenced the classic drama of India is now reduced to a minimum. India possesses a rich dramatic literature which deserves far more attention than it has yet received from

the student of the history of the player's art. The bibliographical lists of Indian dramas show titles of not less than five hundred plays, a number that compares favorably with the histrionic output of the English Elizabethan and Restoration periods. Some of these compositions in prose and verse presented before kings, as they were described by some of the native scholars, may date back fifteen centuries or more, and the movement reached its zenith when the Roman drama had died out and before the rise of the drama in Europe, still sunk in the Dark Ages, had yet begun. The Sanskrit drama throughout is the romantic drama, the drama of Shakspeare's latter days, and not the classic drama of the Greeks. There is, in fact, no tragedy, for though there is sometimes a very close approach to it, a happy solution must always be found.

In the long line of Sanskrit dramatists the best known name, familiar to many of you already, is Kalidasa, the Hindu Shakspeare, as he is sometimes called, whose date cannot be placed later than the beginning of the fifth century A.D., and who may have flourished earlier. His "S'akuntala," when it was translated by Sir William Jones more than a century ago, gained the enthusiastic praise of Goethe and evoked the admiration of Schiller, as it has won the appreciation of lovers of good literature ever since. This will always be so, and Kalidasa's grasp of the dramatic conception, his skill in portraying characters, his deft handling of incident and situation, his delicacy and refinement of feeling, together with the beauty of his language and style, will be admired as long as literary taste exists.

If there were time, I should like to sketch some of the scenes in one or other of his three plays, to set forth in Kalidasa's own words the story of S'akuntala's love, to picture her dismay when the enchanted ring which binds her to her royal lover is lost, their pathetic separation, and the almost Shaksperian scene where the fisherman who has found it is haled into court, and to tell you how, after the long and painful separation,

the loving couple are united in the embrace of their princely son: but that would carry us too far afield.

Should we seek to parallel Shakspeare, there is a still earlier drama, the "Clay Cart," attributed to King S'udraka, which combines all the elements of an Elizabethan play, even to complications through mistaken identity, disguise, the use of stage properties, the introduction of a gambling episode and a political sub-plot, together with a supposed murder and a trial for life on the ground of circumstantial evidence, only to reach a happy solution, in conformity with the laws of Hindu dramaturgy, when the reformed gambler who has gone into a monastery comes into court and tells his tale. I might cite the names of a dozen gifted playwrights in early India. The list would include King Harsha, a literary patron and himself an author of other plays in the seventh century, and it would also contain an indirect parallel to *Romeo and Juliet* by Bhavabhuti in the eighth century and a clever drama of Machiavelian policy, a sort of Indian dramatic "Richelieu" by Vis'akhadatta a century later; nor should I forget the admirably constructed drama of the "Curse of the Angry Priest" by Kshemis'vara, who wrote in the tenth century a play on the sufferings of a good king, which has all the dramatic qualities of the story of Job. Dozens of parallels might likewise be drawn with the West in regard to scenic structure, style, action, the use of dialect characters, inanimate objects, letters, pictures, and rings, as a means to complicate the story, or the introduction of pathos and despair, fun, humor, and surprise, or even the supernatural, to bring about the desired result. They all seem quite modern, although anticipating Shakspeare by a thousand or fifteen hundred years.

But I must pass into that realm of lyric poetry which lies so close to the dramatic. India possesses a number of poems that are worthy to rank as masterpieces in the world's best Literature. From the earliest times the Hindu has turned to lyric strains; the *vīṇā*, or lute, was in high favor. Even the

hymns chanted by the Vedic bards of old, may be regarded as odes or rhapsodies. The great Sanskrit epics occasionally contain lyric passages, and the Sanskrit drama shows the use of the lyric in its perfection. Kalidasa has outbursts of poetic passion in his plays that rival anything in Literature.

Sanskrit Literature includes long lyric poems as well as short, and among India's authors of this type Kalidasa again is peer, his passion rivaling anything in the world's lyric Literature. Like his contemporaries, he is the child of an Indian renaissance, if we understand that term broadly enough, a kind of Sanskrit Marlowe, with all the richness and exuberance, the fancy and imagination, that mark the true poet. One of his poems, "The Seasons," may be compared with Thomson's masterpiece, and the "Cloud Messenger," or lover's greeting intrusted to a cloud about to float away to the beloved, is as delicate as a poem of Shelley, and caught the fancy of Schiller. Not to mention other minstrels, the lyric measures of Jayadeva, who wrote as late as the twelfth century, may be paralleled with the fire and passion of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis."

Some of the Sanskrit lyrics are gems of poetic composition, polished to an exquisite finish of refined workmanship. Those attributed to Bhartrihari in the sixth century, for example, would well illustrate the point. Here is one, for instance, that may be called "Cupid's Whirligig," showing that the course of true love did not always run smoothly, even in ancient India. It is the old case of the beloved not reciprocating:—

"She whom I dote on constantly  
Coldly my wooing spurns:  
Her heart pines for another man,  
His for another burns;  
And yet that certain other maid  
Madly for me doth languish;  
Fie upon her, him, her and me,  
And Cupid, cause of anguish."



Another, which Heine would have liked, runs thus:—

“Thy face, a lovely lily ;  
Thine eyes, the lotus blue ;  
Thy teeth are jasmine blossoms,  
Thy lips the rosebud’s hue,  
The velvet touch of the champak  
Thy tender skin doth own ;  
How comes it the Creator  
Hath made thy heart a stone ?”

And here is still another, which one of my pupils has versified :

“In the heart of the sage there burneth a lamp  
Clear shining by night and by day  
With a flame so pure that he boasteth sure  
There’s naught its beams can stay.

“But a fawn-eyed maid comes gliding by,  
And giveth one glance so bright,  
That his flame once pure is all obscure  
Through Love’s more radiant light.”

In another quatrain, which I may call “Cupid’s Fishing Pond,” the god of love baits his hook with a fair maid; and in still another we have an early parallel to Shakspere’s “All the world’s a stage”; while in many a one a sly touch of humor is found. Sometimes it may be only four lines, — the old story of the boy, the stone, and the dog: —

“A dog in sight? — there’s never a stone to throw!  
A stone at hand? — no dog to hit, I trow!  
Both dog and stone at the same time in view?  
’Tis the King’s dog! pshaw! what am I to do?”

Prose fiction is capitally represented by Dandin in the sixth century, whose “Adventures of the Ten Princes” is an admirable example of the tale of roguery and picaresque novel, and there are excellent examples of story-telling in versified form to be found in the rich collection of the Katha-

Sarit Sagara, or "Ocean of the Streams of Story." The romantic tale in the form of artistic language at least reached its height in some of the court authors of the sixth or seventh century, whose Kavya style, or courtly composition, out-Lylyed Lyly and out-Guevaraed Guevara in conceits, puns, double-meanings, and other fanciful devices almost beyond our comprehension and certainly beyond our taste.

If there were time, I might say much about the other branches of Literature, like the codes of law and traditional wisdom in verse, such as the great collection that bears the name of Manu, the Solon and Lycurgus of Indian legislation. Or I might touch upon poetic treatises dealing with astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and their kin; but they would be largely technical in character and not belong strictly to *belles-lettres*. The only great literary domain which I can think of at the moment as not represented is history. India is of all nations the least historically inclined; her religion and philosophy made her so. There is no Hindu Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, or Tacitus; what history there is, is largely confined to legends, romantic tales, and the records on inscriptions and coins.

As for India's modern Literature, I may say that the lyric, epic, and the dramatic have been fostered and are still cultivated to-day, both in Sanskrit and in the native vernaculars, for Literature is not a lost art among the Hindus. If called upon to summarize my views, I should say that Sanskrit Literature, through its long line of historic development, may claim from the student of comparative Literature the same attention that the Sanskrit language exacts from the student of comparative philology.

## II

The ever hurrying beat of time's footfall warns me that the minutes are speeding on. And what shall I say of Persia —

that other land of sunrise and dawn, whose Literature, though far less extensive than that of India, has nevertheless exercised a potent influence upon the world's Literature and the world's thought.

In Iran, as in Hindustan, and as in Israel of old, the first echo of poetry awoke in a prophet's song. This time it was the voice of Zarathushtra, the great religious teacher of Persia, in the seventh century B.C., chanting in fervid tones an anthem of divine praise. His cry broke the silence of the night perchance in some mountain cavern in northwestern Iran, or heralded the morn as he wandered priestlike throughout the borders of Persia, preaching the story of his communion with Ormazd, the god, and the archangels. It is now a vision of heaven and the future, next an appeal to mankind to repent, to abandon the way of the wicked, and follow the path of righteousness. For a moment there may be a note of despondency in the tone, since deaf ears hearken not unto his word; but comfort is always in God and the marvelous works of creation, so the impassioned question rises to the prophet's lips:—

"This I ask thee — tell me true, O Lord! —

Who in the beginning by his generation was the father of Righteousness?

Who established the path of the sun and the stars?

Who is it, through whom the moon waxes and wanes? —

This and yet more, O Mazdah, I desire to know.

"This I ask thee — tell me true, O Lord! —

Who hath made firm the earth below and the sky

So that it falleth not? Who, the waters and the plants?

Who hath yoked swiftness to the winds and the clouds?

Who is the creator, O Mazdah, of (the archangel) Good Thought?"

His own soul knows the answer, since Ahura Mazdah and the celestial hierarchy form ever the theme of Zoroaster's psalms. These psalms — Gathas, "hymns, anthems," they are called

— give the outpourings of the seer's heart in rhythmic stanzas that resemble in meter the verses of the Vedic bards, though somewhat later in time of composition.

Later than the Gathas in form and structure, but inspired by Zoroaster, though doubtless the work of various hands, are the Avestan Yashts, "praises." In matter of content, however, some of their myths and legends may go back as far as the Vedic age, or even to the primitive period of Indo-Iranian unity, when the ancestors of the Persians and the Hindus still formed an undivided community, a single branch of the Indo-European stock. The majority of the Yashts are composed in meter, and their measured stanzas glorify the various divine personifications or the demigods and heroes of the faith. Sometimes they rise to the height of real poetry, as in the description of Mithra, the angel of truth and celestial embodiment of the sun's light, as he rides forth majestic in his chariot across the heavens, guiding and watching over men, even in the battle which his mighty power sets a-going, or sternly punishing the sinner that breaks his word and pledge. All this is portrayed in the tenth Yasht, a composition devoted to extolling Mithra's grandeur, which is next only to that of Ormazd. As for some of the other parts of the Avesta, I confess that they are rather prosaic, although always imbued with a deep religious feeling which commands respect.

The aftermath that sprang up when the Avestan harvest had been reaped, grew in the field of Pahlavi Literature during the Sassanian period of Christian times; but it yields little to the sickle of the gleaner. In character, for the most part, it is supplemental to the Avesta, and bears much the same relation to that earlier monument as the Patristic writings do to our own Bible, or the Talmudic Literature bears to the Old Testament. Among its products, however, we occasionally gather a few good sheaves. There are compositions, for instance, of a secular type, like the "Romance of King

Ardashir," a narrative of the king's love for a fair princess, his valor in slaying a dragon, and accomplishing other deeds of prowess; and this one in particular has the quality of imagination and deserves consideration as showing the beginnings of story-telling. There are likewise Pahlavi works that contain philosophic discussions or kindred matter, based on beliefs current in the earliest days. There is even something as practical and commonplace as a treatise on the game of chess ! But, taken as a whole, Pahlavi Literature is prosaic in content as it is in form, and whatever may be its secular or religious worth, I think we are justified in withholding from it the title of literary merit.

Far different is the case with Modern Persian Literature, which followed in the wake of Pahlavi Literature, overtaking its slow course with rapid sweep, as early as the ninth or tenth century A.D. Several distinct waves mark the beginning of this new literary era. Paramount among them was that of epic poetry, which broke into a crest nearly a thousand years ago.

The great name in Persian epic poetry is that of Firdausi (935-1020) who devoted his life to singing of the past glories of Iran. His masterpiece, the "Shah Namah," or "Book of Kings," is a personal epic in the sense that it is the work of a single rhapsodist, but it is a national epic because pulsing with the heartbeat of a people. Firdausi's trumpet tones ring and re-ring with the note of the old-time pride of Iran, echoing in clarion blasts the story of her ancient kings in their long line of sovereignty, the valor of her heroes, and the stubborn baseness of her inveterate foes. At times the kindled flame burns high on the heights of epic grandeur, illuminating the long poem with the fire of inspiration, so that its huge mass of sixty thousand verses is aglow, and warms the reader's heart. The fact that Matthew Arnold has given one of the episodes of the "Shah Namah" an enduring form in English verse through his free adaptation of the tragic story of "Sohrab

and Rustum" is among the proofs that the heroic poem is entitled to a place in the circle of epic masterpieces. I wish there were time to compare for you Firdausi's original rhapsody with Arnold's spirited refitting of this story of the fatal combat between father and son, but I must hasten forward to mention another *genre* in Persian Literature, the poetry of adventure portrayed in the romantic epopee.

Nizami, in the twelfth century, is the acknowledged chieftain in the realm of the rhymed romance. Love, heroism, and adventure formed the burden of his song as he tuned his lay at the same moment when the *trouvères* and *minnesingers* in the West were chanting their chansons in the very heyday of chivalry. He is their peer, and in his romantic story of "Khusrau and Shirin" I am not sure that he did not outdo his unknowing European rivals.

One cannot lecture on Persian Literature without ringing changes on the major key of mysticism, because the Sufi note of veiled allegory and masked symbolism is a dominant chord in much of its verse. To appreciate the spirit of Persian poesy's very being, one must understand the fundamental elements of its harmony, its emblematic nature, the delicate interchange of sign and thing signified, subtle play of disguised meanings, esoteric allusions, phraseology with hidden implications that were understood of the elect, and all the refined spiritualization of physical and material images, pseudo-erotic in their nature. This literary species requires that same delicate method of interpretation which may be illustrated by our own understanding of the "Song of Solomon," or measured by our appreciation of the seventeenth-century English poets, Donne, Vaughan, the Fletchers, and Crashaw.

The paragon of Persian mystic poets in the twelfth century was Attar; in the thirteenth it was Rumi. These two mystics overtop all the rest, even Jami in the early fifteenth century. I wish I could illustrate both of them by examples, for I should like to take Jalal ad Din Rumi's long mystical poem, the

"Masnavi," as a specimen of Persian emblematic Literature, but I shall have to content myself with a few lines from the masterpiece of his predecessor, Farid ad Din Attar, a composition that gives an allegorical portrayal of the longing of the human soul for union with the Divine. The poem is filled with the symbolic language of Sūfism. FitzGerald caught admirably its spirit in his free version of the "Bird-Parliament" of Attar, with its catchwords of devotion, hidden under seemingly commonplace terms, and its spiritual ecstasy concealed beneath what appear to be mere offhand allusions. Note the following, for example:—

"The Moths had long been exiled from the Flame  
 They worship ; so to solemn council came  
 And voted one of them by Lot be sent  
 To find their Idol. One was chosen — went,  
 And after a long circuit in sheer Gloom,  
 Seeing, he thought, the TAPER in a Room,  
 Flew back at once to say so. But the Chief  
 Of Mothistan slighted so slight Belief,  
 And sent another Messenger, who flew  
 Up to the House, in at the window, through  
 The Flame itself ; and back the Message brings  
 With yet no sign of conflict on his wings.  
 Then went a Third, who spurred with true Desire,  
 Plunging at once into the sacred Fire  
 Folded his wings within, till he became  
 One Color and one Substance with the Flame.  
 HE only knew the Flame who in it burned,  
 And only he could tell who ne'er to tell returned."

Persia is the land of lyric poetry, the home of the nightingale and the rose. What more need I say on this theme than allow two or three of her minstrels to speak for themselves? Here is a fragment as early as 900 A.D.; it is from Rudagi, the father of later Persian song, and is full of lovelorn sadness:

"When dead thou shalt behold me,  
My lips forever sealed,  
Life from my body severed,  
Passion ne'er more revealed;  
Then seat thyself beside me,  
Whisper one soft word yet:  
'Twas I who slew thee, truly  
Alas! how I regret.'"

Our own Chaucer in his youth, four centuries later, could not have turned the verse more gracefully, or more sadly.

Let us choose another from Rudagi, a lyric on wine, and it has been rendered from the Persian by Professor Cowell, the teacher of "Omar" FitzGerald: —

"Bring me yon wine which thou might'st call a melted ruby in its  
cup,  
Or like a simitar unsheathed, in the sun's noon-tide light held up.  
'Tis the rose-water, thou might'st say, yea thrice distilled for  
purity;  
Its sweetness falls as sleep's own balm steals o'er the vigil-wearied  
eye.  
Thou mightest call the cup the cloud, the wine the raindrop from  
it cast,  
Or say the joy that fills the heart whose prayer long looked-for  
comes at last.  
Were there no wine all hearts would be a desert waste, forlorn and  
black,  
But were our last life-blood extinct, the sight of wine would bring  
it back,  
Oh! if an eagle would but swoop, and bear the wine up to the sky,  
Far out of reach of all the base, who would not shout 'Well done!'  
as I."

A dozen other lyric fragments from the same early poet might be cited. It is sometimes an elegy, sometimes a eulogy, or at times a whimsical quatrain in humorous vein. Some-



body had twitted Rudagi, when old, on the vanity of dyeing his hair. He playfully responded in improvised verse:—

“Black is the color when we mourn,  
And hence there’s reason where  
An old man takes to wearing black  
By dyeing black his hair!”

Handling the quatrain with lyric skill belongs to all the coterie of this same period and afterwards. Yet by none was it brought to higher perfection than by a famous philosopher, physician, and poet, a forerunner of Omar Khayyam, the renowned Ibn Sina, who is better known to us of the West through the Latinized form of his name, Avicenna. One of his verses rings so much like Omar Khayyam that it has generally been ascribed to the later poet. It runs:—

“From Earth’s dark Center unto Saturn’s Gate  
I’ve solved all problems of this World’s Estate;  
From every Snare of Plot and Guile set free,  
Each Bond resolved — saving alone Death’s Fate.”

A brother poet to Avicenna was Abu Saïd, lyricist and mystic. In Abu Saïd the two moods, lyric and mystic, were so closely combined that it is difficult to determine whether in some of his verses the deep religious fervor for the divinity is actually hidden under the passionate guise of love. But it is supposed to be there. Here is one of these pseudo-erotic instances:—

“Last night in my beloved’s arms I lay,  
My prayers she did with sweet caresses pay;  
The moon went down — the sun came up — ’twas day.  
Blame not the moon; we had too much to say.”

This version of mine may be rough and imperfect, but it conveys the sense and modernness of touch which mark some of Abu Saïd’s stanzas to a remarkable degree.

Oft and again the lute strings were touched with lyric perfection by the fingers of Saadi, renowned poet, moralist, and philosopher, who died at Shiraz in 1291. Here, for example, is a verse with a pretty turn, bringing out the legend of the origin of the pearl as an illustration of the virtue of humility. I give it fairly closely after Saadi's own lines :—

“ A raindrop fell from the heavens on high  
And modestly said as it sped through the sky  
Into vast ocean to be forgot,  
‘ It is God's will that I be not.’

“ While viewing itself with eye of disdain,  
A mussel-shell caught up that wee drop of rain;  
Heaven's vaulted dome, then, did silently whirl,  
And lo! the raindrop became a pearl !”

It would be difficult to imagine anything more delicate and graceful. Heine would have reveled in such a verse.

The prince of Persian lyric poets, however, — and you know his name well, — is Hafiz. I need not illustrate by example either his beauty or his skill, because all lovers of passionate poetry know something about his songs of the nightingale and the rose. The very verse which this poet-lover sings forms a part of his own being as Hafiz breathes enraptured sighs over the dark musky tresses of his beloved, or quaffs the ruby wine, red as the blood of the rose on her lips, which transports his soul into an ecstasy, and makes his pulse beat in rhythmic harmony with the throb of his idol's heart.

But my time is up! I have not a moment to speak of Persian prose, so I shall omit it, with a loss more or less small or great. Nor can I say anything about the drama except to state that it is a modern creation, hardly a century old. I must dismiss it likewise, adding only that there may possibly inhere in its crude attempts signs that florescence is ever

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possible in Persia. Yet it is neither through her embryo drama nor through her older established prose that Persia is going to live in Literature. It will be through her great poets of the past and of the hoped-for future, for the soft trill of the nightingale's song still lingers, and the delicate aroma of the Persian rose will never depart from her perfumed atmosphere. The rhythm of Persian verse, the charm of its poetic imagery when not carried too far, the exquisite tenderness of feeling, and the gentle effusion of eternal emotions will continue to appeal to the heart, as in days gone by, as long as human feeling remains unchanged and human sympathy abides.

The hastiest kind of a conclusion must serve as a close to this all too rapid sketch. We have traced in turn the literary development of India and Persia from the first gleam of the sun at early dawn, through the rich crimson of the morning light until it blends into the white splendor of the meridian day, thence dipping with slanting golden rays into the western sea. And lo! the sun has already sped far downward into the darkening West.

## IV

### CHINESE LITERATURE

BY FRIEDRICH HIRTH, PROFESSOR OF CHINESE

THE Literature which forms the subject of the present lecture is more than that of China. As a foreign literature it is studied also by the Coreans, the Japanese, and the Annamites; and it may therefore be quite appropriately called the Classic Literature of the Far East. The civilization of all these nations has been affected by its study, perhaps even in a higher degree than that of the nations of Europe has been by the literatures of Greece and Rome. Millions received from it, in the course of centuries, their mental training. The Chinese who created it have through it perpetuated their national character and imparted some of their idiosyncrasies of thought to their formerly illiterate neighbors.

It would be difficult to describe in a few words the character of this Literature. As representing Chinese civilization, it has been called Confucianist, and this term may hit the truth if we look upon it as covering not only works of the Confucian school, but also "Anti-Confucian" Literature and a good deal of what is decidedly neutral. Certainly, the personality of the sage stands in closer relation to the development of Chinese Literature than that of any other individual stands to any other national literature either in Asia or in Europe. In its earliest development Chinese Literature was either Confucianist or anti-Confucianist; and even in that conspiracy of silence characteristic of the oppos-

ing schools, the one man treated with silence was Confucius. If we consider Chinese Literature as it now exists in myriads of volumes, works which may be called Confucianist in the proper sense of the word are in the minority.

I need not dwell on the fact that Chinese Literature is absolutely autochthonous. In this respect it may be called unique, as scarcely any of the world's other national literatures worthy of such a name may be said to have taken its own course without being influenced by the civilization of neighboring nations. The development of Literature in China corresponds with that of the nation itself. All attempts to derive its origin from quarters outside the traditional cradle of the Chinese race near the banks of the Yellow River should be treated with suspicion. In all such problems which cannot be supported by arguments derived from Literature itself it is safer to admit our ignorance than to trust to the vagaries of a lively imagination. I shall not, therefore, here enter upon the question whether the Chinese race has immigrated from Babylonia or some other part of the world; for I quite agree with Professor Giles, who says, "No one knows where the Chinese came from," and adds, "it appears to be an ethnological axiom that every race must have come from somewhere outside of its own territory." Similarities between certain phases of Chinese culture and ideas current in India, Babylonia, and other seats of ancient culture may be the result of the uniform organization of the human brain, which cannot help arriving at the same inventions calculated to make life more comfortable whether in the East or in the West; or they may be the result of relationships of prehistoric existence, which it would be hopeless to trace by the means now at our disposal. Comparative folk-lore abounds with problems which neither the most ancient literature nor the prehistoric treasures of our museums can explain. Looking at the full moon, I have often wondered why I could not discover in its landscape the figure of a hare or a rabbit; and

yet in remote antiquity millions of Indians and millions of Chinese saw it, as well probably as millions of pre-Columbian Mexicans and Mayas. Such similarities can be traced between numerous characteristics of Indian folk-lore and what appear as repetitions with but slight modifications in Chinese Literature as early as the fourth century B.C. But, since no intercourse has been shown to have taken place between India and China at that early date, I am inclined to think that the connecting link lies far back in prehistoric periods when the foundations of popular tradition on both sides were laid either in China, or in India, if not elsewhere. We need not be surprised to find that these Indian traditions do not appear in the earlier Chinese Literature. The reason may be that all we know of Chinese history and popular life previous to the fourth century B.C. has been transmitted by Confucianist writers, who would not place on record ideas at variance with their own. But for this one-sidedness of the earliest historians the Chinese would perhaps appear to us entirely different in character from what they seem to have been when seen through the eyes of Confucianists. Those Indian reminiscences, first placed on record in the fourth century B.C., may have been current in China from ages immemorial. Who can tell where and when they originated? Mythological and legendary ideas and folk-lore may have been the property of a nation for a thousand years or more before they make their appearance in its literature. The mere fact of foreign ideas of any kind being thus traced in a literature need not, therefore, be looked upon as proof of their having been imported from abroad, unless it can be shown under what circumstances they traveled from one country to another. This is, however, not the case with the foreign allusions in the Chinese Literature of the fourth century B.C. As late as the end of the second century B.C. India was a *terra incognita* to the Chinese. Had it been known earlier, the account of Chang K'ien, the discoverer, whose attention was

first drawn to the existence of such a country during his visit to Bactria in 127 B.C., would not have been regarded as a discovery. The traces of Indian lore found in Chinese Literature in the works of certain post-Confucian writers must, therefore, either have soaked through that impenetrable wall of the Tibetan highlands, or the deserts of Eastern Turkestan, or have originated in prehistoric times. Certainly, part of the Literature which the Chinese themselves consider their best, the so-called "Chinese Classics," cannot be said to have been influenced from any quarter.

This very term, "Chinese Classics," invented by foreigners to designate the standard works of Confucianism, assigns to Chinese Literature a distinctive character. If we speak of English, French, or German classics, we think of works of poetry. The Chinese apply a different scale to the estimation of their Literature. The names which may be said to stand first in English Literature, Shakspeare and Milton were those of poets; so were the names of Schiller and Goethe in Germany, of Petrarch and Dante in Italy, and of Calderon and Cervantes in Spain. The Chinese are probably quite as fond of their great poets as we are of ours; but as the first representatives of their Literature they would never hesitate to point to Confucius and Lau-tzi, thinkers but not poets. All together, the Chinese classification of Literature differs a great deal from ours, and it will be worth our while to say a few words on that subject.

The Chinese do not possess any work which might be called "a history of Chinese Literature." To make up for this deficiency, however, they possess catalogues of standard Literature as represented in their Imperial libraries. The oldest of these catalogues was the one of the Imperial collection of the earlier Han dynasty, which was destroyed by fire during the insurrection of the usurper Wang-mang, about nineteen hundred years ago. It consists mainly of a list of books, by more than six hundred authors, arranged with some kind

of classification, and headed by the works of the Confucian school.

The next great catalogue was that of the Sui dynasty, describing the state of Chinese Literature about 618 A.D., when the Sui was displaced by the T'ang dynasty. This catalogue has furnished the pattern for all future classifications of Literature up to the present day. The Imperial collection was then for the first time divided as at present, into four great divisions, called *k'u*, i.e. "storehouses" or "treasuries," the arrangement of which may be said to correspond to the relative estimation in which the several branches of Literature are held by Chinese critics. The "Four Treasuries" (*ssü-k'u*) are: —

(1) *Classics (king)*, by which name the works of the Confucian school with their extensions and commentaries are understood;

(2) *Historians (shī)*, containing historical, biographical, geographical, etc., works;

(3) *Philosophers (tzi)*, with the exclusion of the Confucian classics, including besides a host of miscellaneous philosophical writers the entire Tauist Literature, works on agriculture, military science, astronomy, divination, medicine, etc.;

(4) *Belles-lettres*, including the poetical literature and miscellaneous prosaists.

Several later catalogues represent the state of Literature at certain periods. Thus we have one, the *Ch'ung-wön-tsung-mu* in sixty-six volumes, published in the eleventh century, and the description of the private collection of Ch'ön Chön-sun, a bibliophile of the thirteenth century, and similar records of historical value down to the great catalogue of the Imperial Library in Peking, published in 1782, now the principal source of our knowledge of Chinese Literature. To give even a faint idea of the contents of this great collection — consisting of 3460 works in more than 75,000 volumes — is, of course, impossible in a space of time calculated by minutes;



I shall, therefore, have to confine myself to a discussion of a very few of the more important works.

The first of the four treasures into which the Imperial Library, and with it Chinese standard Literature, is divided treats mainly of Confucius and his school. Confucius sprang from a family named K'ung, whose home was near K'ü-fóu in the present province of Shan-tung, where thousands of descendants still survive, with their senior, the Duke of K'ung, probably the oldest nobility in the world. His personal name was K'iu, but since he is often quoted with the epithet *Fu-tzī*, meaning "a philosopher," his name and title *K'ung Fu-tzī* has in the early Latin translations of his works been Latinized into Confucius. Being born in 551 B.C., he was almost a contemporary of Pythagoras. His life was mainly devoted to moral and social reforms among his people; and, in order to do as much good as possible in this respect, he approached the dukes and princes of his state and its neighbors, tendering advice wherever it was needed and acceptable, though sometimes with ill success and hampered by the prejudices of adversaries. By the study of books containing records of past periods he had constructed a moral standard, which he exemplified in his own life and which he, by teaching, persuasion, and government, tried to cause others to adopt, as long as he had the chance to practise it. As magistrate in a city and district of his native state, and later as minister of justice, he enforced what he considered good behavior among the population, and a great deal of his teaching concerned the question what it is proper for the "superior man" (*kün-tzī*), the real gentleman, to do, or not to do. His efforts at moral reform were crowned with great success; but intrigues brought about an estrangement with his duke, which caused him to follow a wandering life for fourteen years. At the age of sixty-eight he was recalled to his native country, where he died in 479 B.C., leaving a number of disciples.

With all the disappointments he encountered in life, Confucius has certainly had great influence on the development of the Chinese national character. This influence was of a threefold kind. It was based on his writings, on his sayings, and on the example of his personal life. He did not write much himself, but he did important editorial work; and his sayings were collected and placed on record for the benefit of later centuries by the followers of his disciples, so that a number of works may be said to have seen the light under his inspiration. These are the works which the late Professor Legge, their translator and commentator, has called the "Chinese Classics." They consist of two series of books, the so-called "Five Canons" (*wu-king*), works of pre-Confucian origin, but partly edited or compiled by the sage himself, and the "Four Books" (*ssü-shu*), texts connected with Confucius' life and teachings, but written and edited by later authors.

The books to be included in or excluded from these classics have in the course of centuries been subject to changes at the hands of critics; but at present the following standard is recognized.

A. The "Five Canons" (*wu-king*) comprise the following works:—

(1) The "Canon of Changes" (*I-king*), now probably the oldest book extant of the Chinese, mainly a work on divination, based on the so-called *pa-kua*, the Eight Mystic Diagrams, supposed to have been invented by the legendary emperor Fu-hi. They consist of a series of combinations of broken and unbroken lines, the former representing the female, the latter the male, principle in Chinese natural philosophy.

It has always impressed me as one of the secrets of the origin of language, as well as of mankind, why early man assigned sex or gender—male, female, or neuter—to every object of nature. It must be one of the earliest traditions of mankind that, for instance, a stone cannot be merely a stone pure and simple, but that it must also be either a man or a

woman. The English language, it is true, has almost emancipated itself from that prejudice; but in quite a number of other languages even inanimate objects are represented as being either masculine or feminine, if not neuter. In these languages gender may be indicated by inflection or by the article. The Chinese language knows nothing of the kind; but, to make up for it, the idea of gender has survived among the people in its natural philosophy as a popular science. For even the non-educated in China know that the sun is male and the moon female; that heaven and earth, day and night, north and south, white and black as opposites, are respectively male and female. Mysterious influences are attributed to the two sexes, and the preponderance and relative position of the one or the other in the "Eight Diagrams" expresses conditions which it would require a complicated commentary to describe.

The original "Eight Diagrams," each of which consisted of three lines, male or female, and which were held to denote certain elements of nature, such as earth, water, etc., were doubled up and made to consist of six lines each so as to yield, with all the possible permutations, sixty-four combinations. Each of these corresponded to a certain condition of life or nature, which has been explained and extended in a copious commentary. This somewhat complicated system of occultism, if it may be so called, is ascribed to Wōn-wang, the heroic duke of a palatinate on the western frontier, who is supposed to have written its main text while being held in prison by Chóu-sin, the vicious last monarch of the Shang dynasty, whose downfall was brought about by Wōn-Wang's son Wu-wang, the first emperor of the Chóu dynasty in 1122 B.C., according to the Chinese standard chronology. The Chinese have for thousands of years looked upon the "Canon of Changes" as their chief instrument of auguration; but from our point of view, it is merely the reverence with which it is regarded in China and its supposed high antiquity that cause

it to figure as one of the most important products of the native Literature. Confucius himself recommended it; hence it has been received among the sacred books of his school. The wildest speculations have been brought to bear on this "noli me tangere" by some European scholars without, as far as I can judge, any palpable result. The "Canon of Changes" may be looked upon as the literary basis of that mysterious geomantic system known as Fōng-shui, which, ridiculous though it may appear to the European mind, has exercised greater and more lasting influence over Chinese public and private life than thousands of volumes of sober common-sense literature. Fōng-shui, literally translated, means "wind and water," a name full of mystery, said to have been chosen "because it is a thing like wind, which you cannot comprehend, and like water, which you cannot grasp." To us the "Canon of Changes" with all of its Fōng-shui is nothing more than a huge structure of systematized superstition; but how serious the Chinese have at all times been in their study of it may be gathered from the fact that, according to the Imperial Catalogue, a library of not less than 317 works in 2371 volumes is devoted to commentaries upon it.

(2) The "Canon of History" (*Shu-king*), a collection of documents describing certain sections of the most ancient legendary history. In it the emperors Yau, Shun, and Yü are held up as models of good monarchs, in contrast with certain bad rulers who brought about the fall of their dynasties. It brings Chinese history down to the foundation of the Chóu dynasty in the twelfth century B.C., and refers to events reaching well into the eighth century according to the Chinese standard chronology, which in the earlier period is, of course, very doubtful. It is, however, backed by the coincidence of certain eclipses of the sun mentioned in Chinese records with those calculated by Western astronomers as having actually occurred as early as 776 and 720 B.C. Unfortunately the *Shu-king* is our only source of the most ancient history; and,

though it reflects apparently the orthodox views of the governing classes, — emperors, feudal lords, and officials, — it is one-sided as a purely Confucianist work. A few generations after Confucius Chinese Literature reveals characteristics of culture, folk-lore, and art which must have required centuries to develop, and which are entirely lost in such works as the *Shu-king*, because they did not fit into the orthodox frame of a Confucian classic. The records regarding that early legendary period of Chinese national life have, of course, to be studied *cum grano salis*: the good men shown up in them are much too good, and the bad men are much too bad, to be considered as having been drawn from life. But this need not condemn the book as entirely worthless. Hypercritical minds, which can often be proved to be the least critical, have tried to discredit the Confucian tradition to suit some sensational theory. Thus we hear that the early heroes of Chinese tradition down to the time when undoubted history begins were not Chinese at all, but were Indian gods grafted on the real Chinese history; and another much too ingenious author recently wrote a book with motives quite different from those which resulted in Archbishop Whately's "Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte," in which he tried to prove that no such personage as Confucius ever lived, and that the entire early Chinese history did not exist.

(3) The "Canon of Odes" (*Shi-king*), containing over three hundred poems which have been current among the people before Confucius' time. Some of these odes can be fixed in connection with certain historical facts, and many may have been sung by the nation and its bards centuries before they were collected, arranged, and edited by Confucius, who may be said to have done for them what the Grimm brothers did for the German fairy tales. The odes of the *Shi-king* are a mine of information for the most ancient culture of the Chinese; but they are, of course, dry reading for those who expect a literal translation. If the translation of poetry

from foreign languages generally is an unwelcome task, requiring as it does a philologist and a poet combined in the translator who is constantly subject to the conflict between faithful adherence to the original and poetic license, the rendering of a Chinese poem into English is a particularly thankless one. For a literal translation the philological edition of the *Shi-king* by the late Professor Legge is the standard work. However, Dr. Legge was anything but a poet. The flavor of these ancient rhymes may appeal to a native thoroughly at home in Chinese ancient folk-lore, but will hardly ever do so to a European reader. Readable translations, of course, lose as much in philological accuracy as they gain in poetical charm. There is an excellent German translation by Victor von Strauss, in which the poetic spirit is occasionally rendered without sacrificing too much of philological accuracy; and among English translations the one that will appeal most to Western readers is that of Mr. Clement F. R. Allen. Such as it is, I look upon the venerable "Canon of Odes" rather as a source of information on Chinese ancient culture than of poetical enjoyment.

(4) The "Canon of Rites" (*Li-ki*), a collection of rules describing, to the minutest detail, the ceremonial to be observed by the Chinese gentleman on all occasions of daily life. Similar in spirit is another work, which is not now comprised among the "Five Canons," though fully as important as the *Li-ki*. It describes under the title *Chóu-li* the government and its many subdivisions with their functions during the Chóu dynasty.

(5) The "Spring and Autumn," in Chinese, *Ch'un-ts'iu*, an historical work containing in the tersest possible language the annals of the state of Lu, where Confucius was born. It is supposed to have been compiled by Confucius himself; and its style, consisting in the simple statement of events in strictly chronological order, has become the pattern for numerous later works on historical subjects. Much more important

than the "Spring and Autumn" annals is the commentary upon them known as *Tso-chuan*, by Tso-k'iu Ming, which is the chief source of our knowledge of Chinese history during the period covered by it, 722-469 B.C.

The "Five Canons" do not contain any of the teachings of Confucius; but, having been edited, compiled, or recommended and approved by the sage, they have been received among the Confucian classics. His teachings are embodied in the "Four Books," or *ssi-shu*, the real text-books of Confucianism, viz.: —

(1) The *Lun-yü*, literally translated "Conversations," or "Discourses," because the master's views are set forth in them in the form of dialogues. Legge calls the book "Confucian Analects." The key-note of these discourses is that virtue placed by the Chinese of all ages above every other, — namely, filial piety. This is the source of all happiness in family life; it covers the respect due to the senior by the junior, and, in its widest sense, is applicable to society at large. The State with its government is merely family life on a larger scale. The sovereign and his assistants represent father and mother, and the people, their subjects, may be called their children, who owe them obedience as part of their filial piety in the broader sense. Man in his relation to the world is considered from five points of view, hence the "five relations" (*wu-lun*): (1) sovereign and subject, (2) father and son, (3) husband and wife, (4) elder and younger brother, (5) friend and friend. In each of these relations man has his duties, the proper discharge of which determines the character of the ideal good man, *kün-tzi*, usually translated by "the Superior Man" — the very reverse of Nietzsche's "super-man." Every respectable Chinese of the Confucian school tries to conform his character as nearly as possible to that of the Superior Man. We must, of course, look upon Confucius himself as an example of the Chinese model gentleman of all ages, and so, indeed, he was, as regards purity of morals, loyalty to

his sovereign and government, and deep respect for the social order of his time and nation. But he clearly went too far in matters of detail. Imagine the subject of a small European State carrying his loyalty so far as to don his dress-coat, white necktie, and all his decorations even on his sick-bed because his grand-duke had announced an intended visit to the patient. This is what Confucius is supposed to have done. For we read: "When he was sick, and the prince came to visit him, he had his face to the east (the correct position for a person in bed), caused his court robes to be spread over him, and drew his girdle across them." Quite a number of similar incidents, illustrating his pedantic adherence to little acts of ceremony, and representing him as a man full of caprice, have been placed on record in the tenth book of the *Lun-yü*, with an amount of devotion not surpassed even by Boswell's regard for the great Dr. Johnson's little weaknesses.

(2) "The Great Learning" (*Ta-hio*), a short treatise on self-culture, based on knowledge as a means of reforming society.

(3) "The Doctrine of the Mean" (*Chung-yung*), also translated by "The Golden Medium." It recommends the middle course in all walks of life.

(4) "The Philosopher Mōng" (*Mōng-tzī*), i.e. Mencius, the name invented, like that of Confucius, by European translators writing in Latin. Mencius flourished about two centuries after Confucius; but he did more in working out the Confucian system, and especially in applying it to practical state and social life, than all the contemporaneous disciples and even the master himself. This may have been due to the fact that, to prove the correctness of his views against so many rival philosophers who had been successful since Confucius' lifetime, he had to double his efforts to make himself understood by the masses. Mencius has thus become a real educator of his people. Compared with Confucius he is moderate in requiring the observance of outer formalities;



but he insists on the perfection of the inner man. Benevolence and justice are the great virtues which should govern man's actions in all his relations, the most important of these relations being that of sovereign and people; and sovereigns should cultivate these virtues in the first instance. The great lesson Mencius gives to mankind of all times and throughout the world concerns the education of one's personal character. Character is more important than cleverness. Man's life ought to be a constant strife in subduing one's passions; and all this striving for perfection should not be undertaken for the sake of external rewards, but for the pleasure one takes in perfection itself.

Like Confucius, Mencius was loyal to the traditional sovereigns and the federal constitution of the Chóu dynasty. His zeal in this respect was bound later to stigmatize the Confucianist school as the chief enemy of the new order of things under Shí-huang-ti, the first emperor of the Ts'in dynasty, who had gained the throne of China by the utter disregard of loyalty and legitimacy. This emperor, the celebrated "burner of the books," resolved to blot out every trace of that school which was bound both by tradition and by its entire character to side with the ruined house of Chóu and its ancestors. The emperor's plan, suggested to him by his minister Li Ssi, to destroy all existing Literature with the exception of works on divination, agriculture, and medicine, could not, of course, prevent many books from being secretly buried, immured, or otherwise concealed, and thus saved from oblivion.

The Confucian classics of which I have tried to give a faint idea are, of course, not the only books forming the first of the "Four Treasuries" of Literature. The greater part consists of commentaries and expositions and some independent works of ancient origin, not received among the number of canons, such as the *Hiau-king*, or "Canon of Filial Piety," ascribed to Tsöng Ts'an, one of the disciples of Confucius, and the *ÿr-ya*, a dictionary of terms used in the Classics, the oldest

work of its kind. The study of the Classics has given rise to quite a number of glossaries and dictionaries published from the beginning of our era down to the K'ang-hi period. In some of these special attention is paid to the structure of the ideograms representing the words to be explained, as in the *Shuo-wön*, published in 100 A.D.; others are chiefly devoted to the description of sounds. The modern standard dictionary is that published by a commission of scholars under the emperor K'ang-hi, a philological compilation of undoubted authority somewhat like the "Dictionnaire de l'Académie" in France. Its definitions are supported by numerous quotations from the entire standard Literature. Still more detailed is another work, published by the same great emperor in 1711, the *P'ei-wön-yün-fu*, in more than a hundred volumes. This is a concordance of many thousands of passages arranged according to the rhyme of the last character in terms of two or more syllables serving as catchwords: it is of the greatest use to all students engaged in Chinese research work.

The second of the "Four Treasuries" is the one called *Shi*, or "Historians." It comprises works on the history of China and her neighbors in Asia, covering besides history in the proper sense a number of cognate branches such as biography, geography, etc. The historical works of Confucian origin, such as the *Shu-king*, the *Ch'un-ts'iu* and their commentaries, have been included among the Literature on classics and do not appear in the historical Treasury.

The first place in this division is given to the so-called "Twenty-four Histories" (*ir-shi-ssi shi*), each of which is generally devoted to one of the several dynasties that have occupied the Imperial throne. Apart from the differences in style and arrangement these quasi-official histories are distinguished from other historical works mainly by their origin. They have all been compiled by government officials holding the position of state historiographers *ad hoc*; and the records on which they are based belonged to the secret archives to

which only the confidential state historiographer had access. He was supposed to withhold information on what he had entered in these records from any one among his contemporaries, not excepting even the sovereign and his ministers. The histories of the several dynasties were not written until some time after their fall, when certain historians of the succeeding dynasty were commissioned to compile them from materials taken over with their archives. This system has worked well enough in China; and we have scarcely any more reason to find fault with its results than we have with historical works in the West. We meet with exaggerated views, of course; and differences of opinion have in China, as they have with us, given rise to volumes of criticisms; but the apologies for misjudged characters are probably not more frequent in Chinese history than they are in that of Rome.

At the head of the twenty-four Histories stands as the oldest and best the *Shi-ki* by Ssi-ma Ts'ién, the Herodotus of China, who died about 85 B.C. It describes the history of China as accepted by native scholars from the time of Huang-ti, supposed to have lived about 2700 years B.C., down to the time of the emperor Wu-ti. Ssi-ma Ts'ién was a contemporary of the celebrated general Chang K'ién, the Columbus of the Chinese, who traveled to the banks of the Oxus, and, after a visit to the Indo-Scythian court and the Greek kingdom of Bactria, was the first to tell his countrymen that the world contained some other countries inhabited by civilized nations like the Chinese. Chang K'ién's report is reproduced in the *Shi-ki*. It inaugurates a new era in Chinese art and culture, the era of foreign, Western Asiatic, and even Greek influences by way of Bactria and the Tarim basin. The gigantic work of translating the *Shi-ki* into French has been successfully undertaken by Professor Éd. Chavannes of Paris.

The remaining dynastic histories are arranged on an almost uniform plan. They are mostly introduced by a series of

chronological accounts, recording day by day the events that had occurred under each of the several emperors of the dynasty. "Court chronicles" we may call them as distinguished from the second part, in which we find valuable material for the study of certain phases of cultural life, such as astronomy, ceremonial, music, criminal law, political economy, literature, etc. The greater part of the entire history, however, is devoted to the biographies of the remarkable men of the time, to which are added accounts of the foreign nations known to the Chinese. These accounts are of the greatest value to the investigator of Asiatic history and geography. They contain ethnographical sketches of the Tartar nations in the north and west of China, chief among whom there were in ancient times the Hiung-nu, the Huns of Western history, whose migrations to the confines of Europe can be traced to periods as early as the first century B.C. Their place during the early part of the Middle Ages was taken by the Eastern and Western Turks, their blood relations, whose history appears in lapidary style in Old-Turkish characters on some famous stone slabs discovered by Russian travelers in Mongolia. The work of deciphering these mysterious inscriptions, formerly believed to be runes, has been greatly facilitated by the detailed ethnographical accounts found in the dynastic history of the period. These accounts are also our chief source of information for the later Turks known as Uigurs and down to our own times of the Mongols, Tunguses, etc. Even portions of the Roman Empire are described in contemporaneous accounts, the identification and interpretation of which has become an unexpected, helpful source for our knowledge of ancient trade and traffic with the Far East.

Another class of historical works has been created in imitation of Confucius' "Spring and Autumn" annals. The oldest of these was discovered in 284 A.D. in a tomb dating from about 300 B.C. It deals in chronological order with the most ancient history of China, and since it was written on

bamboo tablets, the old style of writing, it was called the "Bamboo Book" annals. But the most important work in the "Annals" style is the "Mirror of History" by Ssi-ma Kuang, who died in 1086 A.D. A century after him it was republished with copious amplifications and commentaries under the title *T'ung-kién-kang-mu*. The substance of this work has been reproduced in Father de Mailla's celebrated French "Histoire de la Chine."

These are the principal divisions of the historical section, which is, of course, very far from being exhausted by the few works I have named. The Imperial Catalogue contains hundreds of titles of books of great importance, though not included in the standard histories, works on biography and geography, descriptions of ancient capitals, and accounts of foreign nations. Among geographical works China can boast of thousands of local gazetteers, resembling each other in general arrangement, the so-called *chī*. Provinces, prefectures, magistracies, famous hills, lakes, and rivers, even convents and temples, have their *chī*, giving accounts of their history, topography, antiquities, local literature, etc. The water-courses of the empire in its widest extent are represented by detailed accounts, one of the best known among which is the *Shui-king*, or "Water Classic," with its commentary, a most valuable source of historical geography in about 500 A.D. Reports on their journeys by celebrated Buddhist devotees, such as Fa Hién and Hsüan Tsang, each of whom spent about fifteen years in India in the fifth and seventh centuries respectively, also appear among historical books. So does the political cyclopedia of 800 A.D., the *T'ung-tién*, and its continuation by Ma Tuan-lin, the *Wön-hièn-t'ung-k'au* of 1322. Works on government and law, the several catalogues of public and private libraries, together with quite a long list of works on stone and bronze inscriptions, contain titles of great importance.

The third Treasury is that of the Philosophers (*tzi*). This

is the literal translation; but it should be understood that a great many writers are represented in it whom we should call anything but philosophers, while others who might deserve that name, such as Confucius and Mencius, have been dealt with in the "Treasury of Classics." Its first subdivision, called that of the "Literati" (*ju-kia*), comprises a large number of writers on Confucianism, the best known among which is the great defender of this doctrine, Chu Hi. He and quite a number of his literary friends were the disciples of Chóu Tun-i, the founder of a kind of rationalism based on the theory of the male and female principles of the "Book of Changes," which he says emanate from one common source, the "Great Extreme," the ultimate immaterial principle of all things.

Special sections are devoted to writers on "Military Science" (*ping-kia*), on "Legislation" (*fa-kia*), "Agriculture" (*nōng-kia*), "Medicine" (*i-kia*), and other branches. The "Military Science" Literature is, of course, destined to be set aside in order to be replaced by the more useful translations of works on European warfare. Similar experiences will be made in other branches, such as legislation, astronomy, and mathematics. The modern reform movement, initiated by the labors of K'ang Yu-wei and Liang K'i-chóu, has already created a Literature of its own, and will open up a new world to the Chinese mind within the next few decades. The reshaping of old methods in China is bound to affect Chinese Literature as much as political and social life itself, and many of the time-honored works figuring now on the shelves of the philosophical "Treasury" will serve as a source for historical studies only. In this respect, however, they will retain their eternal value. The philosopher Kuan-tzī will at all times hold his position as the politician who applied the statistical method to practical statesmanship as early as the seventh century B.C.; and works like the great Chinese pharmacopoeia, the *Pōn-ts'au-kang-mu* of the sixteenth century A.D., as representing the entire stock of Chinese science reviewed histori-

cally from the earliest time will not be set aside for generations to come.

Works on medicine, of which subject the Chinese have a very extensive Literature, and those on divination will be studied as long as the "Book of Changes" is considered the source of all wisdom; and foreign science with all its superior methods will find it hard to drive them out of the field. Works on Art, like Art itself, are always sure to have their eternal value; and Chinese Literature, unlike the literatures of Western Asia, is quite rich in such works throwing light on the development of pictorial art, calligraphy, music, archery, etc. Archæology, too, has its literature in a long series of special works, and there are few varieties among the celebrated objects of vertu coming from China which are not described from the historical and technical point of view in some general work, or some monograph. Such monographs we have on ancient swords, tripods, and other sacrificial bronzes, bricks and tiles, ink-stones, ink cakes, coins; and not only the *chinoiserie* of our museums have been described in special notices, but almost every important phase of cultural life has its monograph. Thus we have special books on tea, on wine, on bamboo trees, oranges, chrysanthemums, mushrooms, on soups, on diet, etc.

The class of writers that seems to justify the name of the "Treasury" are the "Philosophers." We have scarcely time to mention their names. One of the best known is Mo Ti, also known by his Latinized name Micius, the philosopher of mutual love, who presented an almost Christian altruism, as opposed to Yang Chu, whose pessimism was of the most ignoble kind; to call him "the philosopher of egotism" would sound like an apology.

Among the most useful classes of books are the several cyclopedias containing under certain classified heads extracts about almost any subject treated upon in the recognized standard Literature. The most extensive work of this kind is

the *T'u-shu-tsi-ch'öng* in more than 5000 volumes. It is the most bulky printed book in the world and, when set up, fills the walls of a well-sized room. It was printed with movable copper type and published in 1731, only a hundred copies being struck off at the time. Columbia University owns a copy of this remarkable work, a reprint in the size of the original, of which 250 copies were made a few years ago at the expense of the old Tsung-li-yamen. The "Treasury of Philosophers" closes with the two very important and voluminous divisions "Buddhism" and "Tauism." Thousands of works are devoted to that religion which came from India and which has taken possession of the masses probably more than any other teaching. The greater part of these Buddhist books consists of translations from the Sanskrit. These translations were prepared between the first and ninth centuries A.D., partly by Chinese devotees who traveled to India and returned to China laden with formerly unknown sacred books, and partly by Indians who had studied Chinese in China. Through these translations thousands of religious technical terms have been introduced into the Chinese language from some Indian prototype, and all Chinese Buddhist texts bristle with Sanskrit words transcribed in Chinese characters. In the Buddhist divine service these foreign words are not understood by the masses; but the priests study them carefully with the assistance of glossaries; Sanskrit is thus to Chinese Buddhists what Latin is to the Roman Catholics, a sealed book to the masses and an object of study to the clergy. The Imperial Catalogue ignores this class of Literature as a foreign element; but Buddhist works of purely Chinese origin are duly recorded. Among these the *Fa-yüan-chu-lin*, a work of the seventh century in 100 sections, explaining the Buddhist philosophy to Chinese readers, and a series of learned works containing the biographies of over a thousand celebrated Buddhist saints and priests under the title *Kau-söng-chuan* deserve to be mentioned.



The works on Tauism are much better represented in the great Catalogue than those on Buddhism. The *Tau-tö-king*, that incomprehensible text ascribed to Lau-tzī himself, with all its many editions and commentaries, claims, of course, the chief attention of Chinese literary circles. The work has been declared a forgery by Professor Giles, who has also translated that most important Tauist work of the philosopher Chuang-tzī, which may be looked upon as by far the best and most intelligible exponent of early Tauism. All together the Imperial Catalogue discusses 144 works under the head of "Tauism."

To do justice to the last and by far the most voluminous among the "Four Treasuries," that of *Belles-Lettres*, with the polite Literature of the Chinese, I should have been obliged to set insufficient store by the Classics, the Historians, and the Philosophers, more important in shaping the Chinese national character, though perhaps less interesting from the foreign point of view. Of its five subdivisions the first deals with the so-called "Elegies of Ch'u," because they take precedence on account of their high antiquity. Their author, K'ü Yüan, had been the intimate friend and adviser of his sovereign, the King of Ch'u, a large and powerful country on the banks of the Yang-tzī, about 314 B.C., but fell into disgrace through the unjust denouncement of a set of jealous courtiers. His melancholy outbursts of feeling over the unjustness of his fate formed the subject of a poem by him, entitled "Li-sau," "Incurring Misfortune," or "Under a Cloud." When his enemies continued their persecutions, he drowned himself. This sad event is commemorated throughout China on the anniversary of its occurrence in the midsummer by a kind of regatta known as the dragon-boat festival. K'ü Yüan's world-weariness, traces of which may be discovered in the early ballads of the still more ancient "Canon of Odes" as well as in later poems, may be due to a kind of emotional susceptibility that we may even now have occasion to observe as a characteristic among

the Chinese. K'ü Yüan's poetry set the example to some of his contemporaries, whose effusions were united to his under the title "Elegies of Ch'u."

The second subdivision is entitled "Individual Collections," the "*Œuvres complètes*" of certain writers. They contain Literature of every description, and some of China's greatest poets, especially those of that classical eighth century A.D. Among these we find the Chinese Anacreon Li T'ai-po, Tu Fu, Po Kü-i, and other poets of the T'ang dynasty. Professor Giles, to whose judicious collection of extracts called "Gems of Chinese Literature," I would refer, says of this period: "It was the epoch of glittering poetry (untranslatable alas!), of satire, of invective, and of opposition to the strange and fascinating creed of Buddha. Imagination began to flow more easily and more musically, as though responsive to the demands of art."

This poetry is chiefly of the lyrical kind; and if I were asked to find a characteristic word for some of its characteristic specimens, I would select that untranslatable German word "*Stimmung*." Chinese poems are often pointless; but they introduce us into some distinct frame of mind as the picture of a clever landscapist introduces us to some distinct condition of nature. The little poems of Wang Wei, who was one of the greatest artists as well as a distinguished poet of that period, may be called typical in this respect, and Su Tung-po, the great poet of the eleventh century, could not have expressed this idea better than when he indorsed one of his paintings with merely two lines: —

"Hark to Wang Wei's odes, and ye will behold his pictures;  
Look at Wang Wei's pictures, and ye will hear his odes."

The Chinese have no epic, and the drama did not originally exist in China. It was introduced by the Mongols, who held the throne of China for a century (1264-1368), and during

this time all the best works were written for the stage. Novels, too, were not indigenous in China, but are said to have been introduced from Central Asia. Both novels and theatrical plays are written in a style approaching the colloquial language and are, therefore, not considered to form part of serious Literature. Nevertheless novels are devoured by the people, and plays are performed all the year round.

## V

### GREEK LITERATURE

BY EDWARD DELAVAN PERRY, JAY PROFESSOR OF GREEK

AMONG the many apocryphal stories of the puzzled school-boy one of the most delightful tells of a youth who was asked to give a brief account of the Ancient Greeks. He wrote: "The Ancient Greeks were that marvelous nation that lived all at the same time, and all in the same place, and always thought just alike." And as I think of certain widely prevalent ideas about the ancients a picture comes into my mind: an engraving entitled "The Age of Pericles," showing the great Athenian haranguing (no other word will do) a motley group of heroic figures, all quite undisturbed by the hammering and pounding of masons and carpenters close by, who are busily engaged in erecting the Parthenon and the Propylæa.

We hear much loose talk of "The Greek Spirit" and "Greek Ideals"; but if we ask what they were, we often find conceptions not very different from those of the puzzled schoolboy and the artist of "The Age of Pericles." And really it is no wonder. The oldest literary monuments in the Greek language, the Homeric Poems, must, it seems to me, have assumed practically their present form by 800 B.C. On the other hand, about the latest of the authors who preserved or reproduced in imitation the truly classical spirit, Lucian, may have lived till about 200 A.D. That is a stretch of a thousand years during which countless minds of the greatest keenness worked at the creation and perfection of new types of literary form, or the perpetuation of the types that had best stood the test

of use. But those thousand years by no means represent the whole life of ancient Greek Literature. The Homeric Poems mark the close, not the beginning, of a long literary epoch. Their language is not entirely homogeneous, — far from it. It gives us no true picture of a dialect really spoken by any community, at any one period or in any one region; it contains elements of several dialects, fused with great skill into an artistic blend. Indeed, there is something to be said for the famous theory of Fick, that the Homeric Poems were originally composed in a non-Ionic (or “Æolic”) form of Greek, and afterwards transposed (to use a musical term) into a new form, of prevailingly Ionic type. But whatever may be the genetic history of this wonderfully rich and supple Homeric language, its subsequent career is fairly well known. For hundreds of years it was in constant use as a conventional literary language, undoubtedly committed to writing, yet designed chiefly for oral use, and certainly through many generations of men employed principally in this way. Of it Professor Gilbert Murray truly says: “The ordinary audiences must have understood it as well as, for instance, our audiences understand the authorized version of the Bible, though the differences between Jacobean and Victorian English are utterly trifling compared with those between Homer and the prose speech of the earliest Ionic inscriptions. And how wonderfully the poets themselves knew it! Even under the microscope of modern philology the Epic dialect appears, in the main, as a sort of organic whole, not a mere mass of incongruous archaistic forms. And this language has been preserved and reconstructed by generations of men who never spoke it except when they recited poetry. It was understood by audiences who never heard it spoken except when they listened to poetry. And not a man among them had any knowledge of the laws of language; they had only a sense of style.”

A sense of style! In the last analysis an utterly inexplic-

able possession, a Heaven-sent gift, capable of development but hardly to be produced where it is not found existing already. It was the incomparably good fortune of the Greeks to possess that sense, as it is the heritage of the Irish people, and, in a different phase, of the French, in the modern world. The Greeks, moreover, possessed the knack of turning it to account, of following its promptings and heeding its warnings, in endless details of life. "Greek dramas and Greek temples," says Professor Percy Gardner, "are parallel embodiments of the Greek spirit, and he who would understand that spirit must know something of both. Greek history, whether of politics or colonization or trade or religion or literature or art, is all one; and every branch throws back light on the other branches."

This sense of style shows itself in full bloom in the Homeric Poems, and has entire mastery of the language developed under its guidance. It is already a chastened and sober style when it first appears to us, for all its intensity and variety; remarkably free from extravagance or violence, abhorring ugliness and clumsiness. It is a thoroughly sophisticated style, far removed from a mere untutored grace, completely conscious of the means by which it produces its effects. It is essentially the style of a school. At its previous history we can only guess; but we may safely guess that generation after generation of poets worked over it, choosing elements here and there, smoothing down any roughness, and replacing unmanageable forms by those of some other dialect not too different to seem congruous. The day has gone forever when it could be believed that such poems, in such a style, represented a primitive stage of Greek civilization; and such terms as "The Dawn Age" and Mr. Gladstone's "Juventus Mundi" are as misleading as they are pretty. The "Dawn Age" of Greek civilization lies far back of any period that we have yet been able to reach, or even to approach.

The posterior limit of ancient Greek Literature is hardly

less difficult to set with accuracy. The current of Greek language continued to flow with less abrupt turns, and far fewer actual interruptions, than was the fate of Latin; and though the ancient variety of dialects disappeared under the dominating influence of the so-called *κοινή*, or universal dialect, developed out of the Attic, this universal dialect became and remained the idiom of a widely spread though very heterogeneous population. As the medium through which the gospel of Christianity was at first preached, and as the vehicle of the highest civilization thus far developed, the later form of Greek gained a prestige that insured its persistence through many centuries down to the present time. This persistence through persecution and political decay, through scattering and isolation of communities, and through theological dissensions of unexampled bitterness is one of the most striking phenomena of history.

But the creative power of the Greeks underwent a notable change in the centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ. The vigorous imagination, the keen power of analysis, the insatiable thirst for knowledge, the eagerness to work out new forms, gradually disappeared. The literary treasures of past centuries were already overwhelmingly abundant, so that preservation became of prime importance, and creation succeeded best when it took the form of imitation of the great models. This is why, for all except the professed scholar, the history of ancient Greek Literature is as good as ended with Lucian. The literature of Byzantium or Constantinople is like that of another people, though the language is nearly the same as before. The sense of style is not indeed dead; the ancient models were too good to lose their usefulness or attractiveness; but external conditions are altogether different. A new faith, with an authoritative creed resting on revelation, with an organized and centralized hierarchy, and a political world of absolutism, contrast sharply with the extremely elastic religious belief and prac-

tices and the kaleidoscopic variety of constitutions and states prevailing down to the time of Alexander the Great. The pious Fathers of the Church saw in the intensely human deities of their ancestors but devils and demons and fallen angels still dangerous to the soul of the good Christian. Yet a fortunate tolerance and an admiration, sometimes outspoken, sometimes no doubt prudently concealed, for the great works of antiquity, led to the preservation and copying of these.

With very few exceptions, almost no existing Mss. of ancient Greek classical works were written before 900 A.D. There is one large fragment of papyrus in Berlin, which may have been written as early as 330 B.C.; it contains a portion of the "Persians" of Timotheus, a poet who died in 357 B.C. The "Persians" was probably composed about 400 B.C., so that the Ms. may come within seventy years or so of the first publication of the poem; but even this degree of approach is unique. Of Bacchylides we have since 1897 a papyrus Ms. that may have been written within 450 years after the poet's death. In almost every case many hundreds of years lie between the original composition of a classical Greek work that has come down to us in its entirety and the actual writing of the oldest Ms. in which it is preserved. In the case of Euripides, for instance, not less than 1300 years intervene. The actual production of such Mss. as we have is due chiefly to the patience and devotion of learned monks in the monasteries of Eastern Mediterranean and Ægean countries.

With the Mss., however, of ancient Greek authors fortune has played some strange pranks. Out of the hundreds of tragedies produced at Athens between 500 and 400 B.C. only thirty-two have come down to us: seven of Æschylus, seven of Sophocles, and eighteen of Euripides. But Æschylus is known to have written at least eighty plays, Sophocles over a hundred, Euripides over ninety. Of what must have been a vast mass of early heroic epic poetry only the Iliad and the Odyssey survive, no doubt the noblest of the whole body of



epic poems, yet differing only in degree of excellence, not in kind, from the others. The field of Greek lyric poetry is like the surface of the Acropolis at Athens as one sees it to-day, a bewildering accumulation of fragments, many of exceeding beauty, but broken and battered, sometimes almost beyond recognition. Greek lyric is known to us nowadays chiefly through quotation in later Greek writers; quotation either in the body of an independent work for illustration or argument (so, for example, the longest fragment of Simonides's poetry that exists is quoted piecemeal in the "Protagoras" of Plato, and discussed and pulled to pieces by the persons of the dialogue), or in collections of "Elegant Extracts," preserved without explanatory framing, like jewels without setting. From this statement Pindar and Bacchylides must be excepted; we have many Mss. of Pindar, and the one of Bacchylides just now referred to. The whole body of historical works of the fourth century B.C., and the entire Middle and New Comedy, has as good as perished except in so far as the latter has survived in the "adaptations" of Plautus and Terence; and in the works of Aristotle are huge gaps. One particularly valuable fragment of Aristotle (not universally acknowledged as genuine), containing the greater part of his "Constitution of Athens," was found in 1890, and it contains a number of previously unknown verses by Solon. Of Plato, on the other hand, we seem to have all that he ever published, in fact more, as some of the extant dialogues ascribed to him are certainly spurious.

When so much is lacking from the Literature once in existence it is well to be cautious in making sweeping statements about it. The discovery of a piece of papyrus in an Egyptian tomb may suddenly upset many carefully formed theories. I remember well the passionate ardor with which the professor of Greek archæology at Leipsic many years ago used to argue against the theory, then beginning to be seriously maintained, that Greek statuary of the best period was commonly painted.

He proved to his own complete satisfaction, and I must say to ours, too, for he was very eloquent and had a wonderful gift of seeing only one side of a question, that the painting of marble statues was utterly unthinkable. Yet within a very few years the soil of Greece yielded to the spade of the archæologist statue after statue most elaborately and carefully painted !

However, even after all the vast losses from the once existing body of Greek Literature, enough remains to reveal to us the range and power and originality of the Greek genius. We are still far from understanding all that we have of that Literature; and what has been interpreted to one generation of moderns needs reinterpretation to the next, for the point of view inevitably shifts with the lapse of years. Even the individual scholar finds, in his old age, a meaning and a message in his beloved authors which he had failed to find, or had viewed with half-seeing eyes, in his youth. There is hardly an ancient Greek author whose works, carefully and thoroughly studied, will not throw light upon those of all other Greek authors. Moreover, within the last thirty years such advances have been made in archæology and anthropology that the whole problem of comprehending the vast structure of ancient civilization, Greek as well as Oriental, has been practically restated, and wholly new factors have entered into the equation. Greek Literature is too completely an outgrowth of Greek life to be intelligible except as that life is intelligible; and for the comprehension of that life new helps are furnished on every side, new sources of knowledge are available to the student of to-day of which our fathers never dreamed. The Greek-speaking peoples, formerly thought of as a pure and homogeneous race, are now seen to have been rather of extremely mixed parentage, held together in a very precarious union perhaps quite as much by pressure from without as by natural and mutual attraction. Greek civilization we might describe as a new and splendid pattern worked upon a back-

ground of older and quite different forms of culture, and the old forms often show through and between the lines of the later design. "Purity of race" is a phrase that is anthropologically discredited: "Greek is as Greek does."

It will be best, considering the extent and variety of this Greek Literature to which I am directing your attention, to choose a few of its chief characteristics, as they appear to me, for closer examination.

The first characteristic is that of extreme variety. Adopting the traditional division into poetical and prose Literature, we find that the Greeks gave artistic development successively to *epic poetry* both heroic (Homeric Poems) and didactic (Hesiod); to *philosophical poetry*, in which the external form is that of the epic, that is, the hexameter; to *elegiac* and *iambic poetry*, both named from the form of verse, not from the subject-matter or mode of treatment; to a very elaborate form of *choral lyric*, employed at festivals and on other public occasions, and by the side of this to a purely *personal, subjective lyric*, in a form admirably suited to the expression of intense emotion; then to *dramatic poetry*, both tragic and comic (there is no prose drama in ancient Greek Literature that has survived, though the famous "mimes" of Sophron would doubtless fall under that head); and to *bucolic* or *pastoral poetry* of Theocritus and his school, the last independent form of poetry to be cultivated among ancient Greeks.

Turning to prose, in every sense a secondary form of literature, we may follow the development in succession of *philosophical, historical, and oratorical prose*. Out of the fusion of these originally separate forms issues what may well be called the universal prose style — of course showing many variations and modifications at the hands of individual writers — which becomes the pattern for the prose of the whole Western world.

The origination and development of all these forms of

literary expression were not the achievement of the Greek-speaking people as a whole, still less of any one part of them. We come now to one of the most notable phenomena in literary history: the traditional divergence of dialect between the different branches of Greek Literature. In the glory of having assisted to perfect the many forms of literary Greek many different communities or "tribes" — to use a conventional but very misleading term — had a share. These various communities spoke widely different forms of Greek, some of which are only very imperfectly known to us, whether from scanty literary remains, or a few unimportant and half-decipherable inscriptions, or the incomplete accounts given by grammarians and lexicographers of Alexandrian and Roman times. The speech of outlying communities like Ætolians, Macedonians, many of the Cretan towns, and the like must have been nearly unintelligible to the more highly civilized and refined people of the central cities; even the dialect of Elis, the region of Olympia, where thousands upon thousands of Greek-speaking people congregated every four years throughout many centuries, was always regarded as particularly crabbed and difficult. A modern parallel is the case of Oberammergau, in the Bavarian Highlands, whither the decennial Passion Play brings myriads of Germans to whom the untempered speech of that region is as strange as Dutch or Flemish.

This literary development by regions or localities — I intentionally avoid the word "tribes" — had a striking result: a certain "dialect" became so to speak obligatory for each of the great classes of Literature. That is to say, when a particular branch of Greek-speaking people gave typical development to a particular species of Literature, the dialect in use among them, their vernacular, served as the material out of which a linguistic vehicle of expression for that form of Literature was wrought. Furthermore (and this is the point to be chiefly remembered), that vehicle, thus created, was adopted

by Greeks of other regions and other vernaculars when they composed works of a similar kind. For example, the elaborate and artificial epic dialect seems to have received its final form among Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor; but in succeeding ages whoever composed epic poetry, whatever might be his native dialect, used as a matter of course this same epic dialect, so far as he had mastered it. So, again, the language of choral lyric, conventionally a sort of fusion of several non-Ionic dialects, but chiefly Doric, was employed as well by the Ionic-speaking Simonides and Bacchylides as by the naturalized Lacedemonian Alcman and the Boeotian Pindar. A partial exception to this rule is seen in the case of the Lesbian dialect employed by Alcæus and Sappho, which hardly appears again in Greek Literature; partly because that style of poetry went out of fashion, partly, doubtless, because the dialect was so distinctively and peculiarly local that it was too difficult of acquisition, and not rich enough for general use in the expression of a wider range of ideas.

A curious literary enthusiasm, a harmless but barren *Schwärmerei*, prompted a certain bellettristic lady of Hadrian's court, over seven hundred years after the time of Sappho, to compose four poems in an imitation of the Sapphic dialect, on the occasion of Hadrian's visit to Egypt in the year 130 A.D. These poems are still to be seen, engraved on the colossal statue of Memnon in Egyptian Thebes. Balbilla — that was the ambitious lady's name — was but moderately successful with her Lesbian dialect, and wisely held aloof from the more difficult Lesbian meters.

The various local dialects, however, thus taken for use as literary mediums, underwent many modifications. They were most severely pruned and trimmed, and on the other hand enriched by borrowings from other dialects of Greek. It must be remembered that the literary language is essentially an artificial language. The vernaculars are the real living lan-

guage, not mere corruptions of the literary speech. But a mere vernacular tongue is rarely suited to serious literary production; for one reason, because it is of very limited range. At an early period in their literary history the Greeks felt this to be true. They developed not one indeed but several literary languages. It is interesting and instructive to compare the language of Pindar with that of his countrywoman and elder contemporary, Corinna, so far as the latter is known and accessible from a few short fragments. Corinna's language is of an extreme dialectal type, and must have been very difficult to Greeks not already acquainted with the Boeotian dialect; while Pindar employs a vocabulary and forms which can have offered but little trouble to any educated Greek, difficult as his train of thought must often have been to follow.

The several principal forms of Greek Literature, then, grew up in the environment of different parts of the Greek-speaking world, and preserved to the last many linguistic peculiarities of their originators. To the Ionians belongs the chief share of the glory of having put the Homeric Poems into their final shape, of developing a somewhat different vocabulary and inflection for use in the elegiac and iambic poetry, and of working out for the first time, not only in the history of Greek Literature but so far as we know in the history of Literature at all, a really artistic prose style. What Greek prose might have continued to be but for the artistic feeling of Ionian writers, we may see from the clumsy, disjointed deliverances of some of the earlier philosophers, as preserved to us in detached quotations by later authors. This Ionic prose was eclipsed by the greater Attic style, but not before it had found in the incomparable Herodotus an exponent whose narrative exerts an undying charm.

The choral lyric, or poetry designed to be sung at occasions of public ceremony or worship, seems to have been cultivated most successfully as a whole among Dorian communities, and its characteristics are in the main those traditionally ascribed

to Dorian Greeks: sobriety, stateliness, dignity. Yet the two greatest names in Greek choral lyric are those of a Boeotian and an Ionian, of Pindar and Simonides; and the language of choral lyric is not really Dorian any more than it is Æolian. The Dorian character comes out most plainly in the meters employed, the most stately to be found anywhere in Greek poetry. A striking illustration of this persistence of literary dialect is afforded by the Attic drama. In Greek tragedy, as is of course well known, certain interludes or *entr'actes* were sung by a trained chorus who executed a sort of pantomimic dance in accompaniment. The language of these interludes differs from that of the rest of the play by admitting certain forms of non-Attic type, but only in passages intended to be sung; a sort of reminiscence of an earlier period when the drama consisted of little else than a series of choral odes. The so-called "Doric forms" of certain words, as used in these odes or interludes, are in reality not specifically Doric at all.

The drama is essentially an Attic product. Very possibly the beginnings of dramatic development are due to non-Attic Hellenes, but the Attic people, the Athenians, succeeded in making the drama so completely their own that their claim to inventorship is practically undisputed. In fact, from about 500 B.C. onward, Athens often plays the rôle of appropriator of other states' goods, and gets much credit for introducing, as new, ideas which had really been first broached elsewhere. So with the comic drama: there is good reason to believe that it was composed and performed among certain Dorian peoples, particularly at Megara and in Sicily, long before it was taken up at Athens; but the skill and cleverness of Athenian writers, and the transcendent genius of an Aristophanes, aided by the freedom of speech which was far greater at Athens than elsewhere, secured to Athens the monopoly, one might almost say, of this form of drama. Thus it comes about that the history of Greek drama is the history of Athenian drama. So again with oratory, a point to which I shall revert presently. And

it is worth while to remember that the population of Attica was probably one of the most mixed in Greece, and the dialect better suited than any other to be the medium of dramatic and prose Literature, as uniting in itself elements of many others. Of all the Greek dialects known to us the Ionic-Attic group shows the fewest archaic forms.

After Athens had thus gained the spiritual leadership of Greece no important new species of poetry seems to have been developed, though old forms underwent some important modifications, until after 300 B.C., when Theocritus, of whose life singularly little is known, introduced a new type, the bucolic or pastoral poetry. A Sicilian by birth, he lived on the island of Cos and at Alexandria. With wonderful skill he brought into Literature the pastoral motives of his native country, idealizing the goatherds and shepherds into a form in which they became presentable at court, yet leaving them their depth and intensity of emotion and in the main their broad and homely dialect. The combination of this dialect with the hexameter verse, which had been hitherto almost exclusively Ionic in form, was in itself a notable contribution to literary art.

As the second salient characteristic of Greek Literature I would posit its particularly close and intimate connection, down to about 300 B.C., with the everyday life of the Greeks themselves. Mr. R. R. Marett, in his preface to a collection of very valuable lectures delivered in 1908, at Oxford, entitled "Anthropology and the Classics," says: "To use the language of biology, whereas Greek Literature is congenital, Roman Literature is in large part acquired." No right understanding of either substance or form of Greek Literature is possible to one who regards it in the light of modern literatures, that is, views it as consisting chiefly of works composed to be read to oneself. On the contrary, Greek prose-writer and



Greek poet alike had in mind an *audience*, persons who listened; their appeal to the intelligence of those whose attention and approval they sought was made chiefly through spoken sounds, not directly through written symbols. Even in the time of Plato manuscripts of literary works were not abundant, and the possessor of one would ordinarily read it aloud to a circle of friends; nay, when reading to himself a Greek of Plato's time is likely to have read aloud. The poet, indeed, originally went farther than the prose-writer in his appeal to the ear; he made it not only through words in metrical arrangement, but largely through musical melody as well. The epic poet, composing in the long and stately hexameter; the elegiac poet, using alternately the hexameter and the verse misnamed "pentameter"; and the iambographer, using the trimeter, or verse of normally twelve syllables — these three seem to have designed their verses to be chanted or intoned rather than sung; but the whole character of this versification points to a mode of delivery very different from that of the usual spoken language. The verses of the "lyric" or, to speak somewhat more technically, of the "melic" poets, were undoubtedly always sung to melodies in which the length of each note was accurately determined by the time-value of each syllable as used in actual speech. Our modern forms of verse seem to me to give an extremely false idea of the ancient meters. Unfortunately we cannot, with our present fragmentary knowledge of ancient music, safely go beyond this negative statement. If we had but one fairly good phonographic record of an ancient Greek song, how much better off we might be than we are with several treatises that have come down to us from ancient times on music and meters!

The successive types of Greek Literature reflect faithfully the external conditions out of which they sprang. In some few cases we are fortunately able to trace the process of growth from almost the beginning to the full bloom; but not so in the earlier types. If we could follow out the earlier stages we

should, I believe, find in the Literature what has been found so often in the history of Greek art: a working-out of popular models previously long current in simpler forms. Unfortunately, the phrase "mushroom growth" has acquired a by-meaning which makes it nearly incapable of use in a good sense; yet something very like that process must have gone on in the earlier centuries of Greek Literature, as in many other literatures. As the spawn of the fungi permeates the soil in almost invisible filaments, to be suddenly roused to fertility by favoring conditions of moisture and atmosphere, so the subtle growths of popular songs and tales spring up into brilliant productiveness under the forcing of the master mind.

The earliest stage of Greek society revealed by the archæologist is plainly of an aristocratic type. Chieftains great and small live in castles that are at once the palaces and the sanctuaries, and often the strongholds and places of refuge, of the various communities. The Homeric Poems display a condition of society in which the rule of the nobles and princes is nearly absolute, though tempered by the advice of counselors, smaller chieftains, lesser nobles; but the man of low station in life hardly counts in war, except as rower of ships and desultory fighter in the field, and in peace not at all. Not only in the rare intervals of peace — petty warfare must have been nearly incessant — but in camp, bards sing the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*, the glory of men, that is, their prowess in war, their strength, their cunning. But it is only the nobles that are thus glorified. The poems embodying these praises are of singularly dignified and stately form, in the sonorous dactylic hexameter verse, a verse of simple structure, yet susceptible of manifold modulation. The previous history of the hexameter is still unknown, and probably will remain so; but we may reasonably consider it a development out of simpler forms which gave rise on the one hand, by mere coupling, to the "pentameter," on the other, by coupling and some modifi-

cation, to the "hexameter." The style is deliberate and circumstantial, in no haste to finish its descriptions; the hearers could sit all night if necessary, feasting and listening to the song and chant of the bard. Nor is only prowess in arms extolled; the power of eloquent speech is praised and admirably exemplified. Nestor and Odysseus are real orators from whose utterances one might gather many an example to illustrate principles of style laid down by rhetoricians of later centuries. Everything is astonishingly human, the gods most of all; indeed, they are rather a species of superman, but with the added advantages of distant sight, and instantaneous locomotion, and power of sudden disappearance. They are essentially Greek nobles projected upon the sky. The Greek chieftains portrayed by Homer were most interested, perhaps exclusively so, in tales of the doings of their own kind. The persistence into historical times of such a type of civilization may be observed in Thessaly, where political power seems to have been monopolized by a few great clans.

The other side of the picture is drawn by Hesiod, of whose personality extremely little was known by the Greeks of historical times. To judge from that little, he was a man of humble origin, born in Bœotia as the son of an immigrant from Asia Minor. In his "Works and Days" we are introduced to the man of the people, the weary toiler for his daily bread, whose sordidness, curious canniness, and boundless superstition are all most strikingly revealed. The hexameter is still employed, and seems often too stately a medium of expression for the subject-matter; but probably it was still the only form of verse sufficiently developed to be worth considering.

The eighth century before Christ, in which Hesiod may well have lived, was a time of singular unrest in the Greek world. Everywhere the aristocratic form of community was disappearing, and societies of more democratic type coming into existence, through the middle stage of the *tyranny*, a

form of state in which some individual, usually of noble birth, gained such ascendancy over the commoners that he was able to proclaim himself sole ruler, and often to maintain himself in power for many years. This century is also preëminently the period of colonization, when nearly every Greek town of importance, torn by civil dissensions (which regularly ended with the actual expulsion of the defeated party) and perhaps overpopulated for the small extent of territory which it controlled, established settlements in distant parts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, each of them a new center of Greek life and customs.

In such surroundings the man who had something to say, and could say it well, came to the front. The noble still had many advantages over the meaner man. But the humble man was getting his opportunity; he had at least the privilege of being heard, and might on occasion even turn the issue. How was such a man, or any man for that matter, to win the attention of his fellow-men? There were no newspapers for him to write to, no body of readers to be reached by cheap editions of campaign documents. In fact, the total number whom he needed to influence cannot have been, according to our ideas, very great; even at Athens, most democratic of Greek states, when the total population, including all Attica, must have been six to seven hundred thousand, the number of voters was not over thirty thousand. Those whom he wished to influence had to be reached by the spoken word. In public assemblies every one who gained a hearing might of course hold forth with such native eloquence as he possessed; but how could he be sure that his words would be remembered? There was a better way: to put his ideas into a form easily memorized, and thus adapted to repetition, and suitable to be passed along from man to man. Two forms were chosen in preference to others: the elegiac distich, and the iambic trimeter. Both are forms suited to compact and forcible expression. The iambic trimeter, in particular, approaches

nearer than any other form of verse, according to ancient authorities, to the actual spoken language; it lends itself particularly to satire and invective, which must have played a large part in the public speaking of those days. The most notable figure in the earlier part of this period is Archilochus, a native of the island of Paros, whose life was probably entirely included within the limits of the seventh century B.C. The fragments of his poems show a mind of extraordinary virility and versatility, unmatched in vituperation, yet keenly alive to the joys and graces of life, and (what chiefly concerns us here) with a perfect mastery of the technique of versification. Not even Sappho plays more varied melodies upon her lyre. In particular, his handling of the iambic measures shows the skill of thorough control of his art. The perfection of his trimeters makes it likely that many poets before him had helped develop this measure, or at least that it had already a long history in popular use, simultaneously with the more dignified and splendid dactylic hexameter. The hexameter, indeed, was put to many more uses than merely for epic poetry. Hesiod's use of it for the homely "Husbandman's Calendar" has already been mentioned. There was as yet no art of composing good prose, prose that could stand comparison with the highly developed poetical forms. These forms in fact took the place later occupied by prose; the relation which they bore to the more elaborate and complicated forms of verse, the "lyric meters," was practically the same as that of prose to poetry as a whole. Set, formal expression was still only possible in verse; and verse was really better suited to the needs of those times than prose.

It would be worth while, if time and your patience allowed, to point out the other fields in which the flowers of Literature seem indigenous to the soil. It is everywhere as though we were viewing a garden the flowers in which were only better bred specimens of the sorts to be found all about, outside the wall. One might show, for example, how the growing splendor

of the great national games at Olympia, Delphi, and elsewhere made a victory at one of them so glorious that no ceremonies were too elaborate for the celebration of it, and how, sometime before 500 B.C., the fashion arose among those who could pay handsomely of ordering a triumphal ode from some famous poet, to be sung by a trained chorus at the formal celebration. The fashion seems not to have lasted more than a hundred years, if as long as that; but that hundred years includes Simonides and Pindar and Bacchylides, besides lesser lights of whom we know but little. How, again, the whole history of the tragic drama falls between about 550 and 375 B.C., only a hundred and seventy-five years or so; how the worship of Dionysus or Bacchus, which had spread rapidly among Greek peoples, had been made one of the most important features of the state religion at Athens, and how, after the impulse given by the famous Thespis, the ruder forms of dramatic art, which must have been practised for centuries before his time, were transformed into the lofty and austere beauty of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; how the satire of Archilochus and others found its real successor in comedy as developed at Athens — a vehicle more terribly effective than even the savage iambics could be, when the stinging words were reënforced by the action, the music, and the pantomimic dance of the public performance. Aristophanes and his contemporaries, the remote ancestors of the modern satirical press, are hardly more remote in time than in the distance which separates their skilful and graceful, if often ribald, verses from the hammer-and-tongs caricatures of to-day. The "Old Comedy" of Athens contains some of the bitterest, most unsparing lampoons that are known in Literature, fully equal in gall to those of Archilochus; and, like his, they are couched in verse of great beauty of form, varied by lyrics worthy to be paired with those of any age or land, a combination essentially and characteristically Greek.

The best example of all, however, to show the singularly

close connection of classical Greek Literature with contemporary Greek life is the second great contribution of Athens to the literary eminence of the Greeks,—*Greek oratory*. It brings us also naturally to the consideration of the third great characteristic of that Literature: the appropriateness of the style to the subject-matter, and as a corollary the permanent value of the types of form thus worked out. Appropriateness, in fact, may be called the key-note of the best Greek art, literary as well as plastic and architectural. Ornament is chiefly “structural,” i.e. naturally growing out of the disposition of the material to meet its needs. Nor was the Greek greatly impressed by mere size; the “big thing” as such did not appeal to him. As Ben Jonson expressed it, so he believed:

“In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.”

The endless epics of India would have been artistic horrors to the Greek.

During the first three quarters of the fifth century B.C., Athens had been growing with unexampled speed, and her intellectual development kept pace with her advance in material resources and in military and naval power. She had become the head of a great confederacy of city-states, the members of which presently found themselves in the position, not of allies, but of subjects. A very harsh and unjust regulation established by Athens required all lawsuits between citizens of allied states and Athenian citizens to be tried at Athens. This of course not only enormously swelled the calendar of the Athenian courts, but created (or helped create, for it was in the blood already) a positive mania at Athens for lawsuits, comparable only to that for theatrical performances. Each party to a lawsuit moreover had to appear in court and plead his own cause; naturally many litigants felt themselves unequal to the task of preparing and presenting their own cases, and were forced to learn by heart and deliver speeches

written for them. There were thus at Athens three powerful causes at work to bring about the perfection of a serviceable prose, of a good oratorical style: first, the daily occupation of the courts of law, which were theoretically each the sovereign people itself sitting in judgment, and practically often consisted of a very large number, sometimes several hundreds, of citizens sitting as jurymen; second, the frequent meetings of the assembly, in which the policy and government of the State were discussed with great freedom of speech; and third, the frequent occasions of public celebration when a "set speech," an oration, formed a prominent and favorite part of the ceremonies. Not that most Greek States did not furnish abundant examples of all three; in Sicily, for instance, the turbulence and constant political upheavals of the Greek towns put a premium upon skilful speech-making, and it is very significant that two of the earliest among the celebrated teachers of oratory, Corax and Tisias, and the pompous and flamboyant Gorgias, who carried on their tradition, were Sicilian Greeks. But Athens appropriated the new art, made it over to suit her own conditions, and impressed upon it her own indelible stamp.

It is not difficult for us to-day to understand how the great public festivals, with thousands of spectators eager to hear as well as to see, should have fostered the growth of a sonorous and imposing style of composition and declamation, nor yet how the exigencies of debate in the public assemblies should have taught men to speak to the point, to exhort with fire, and to warn with impressive earnestness. It is more difficult to see how the business of law courts should have tended to develop a chaste and sober literary style, and equally so to understand how the only part of the proceedings in court that was committed to writing and thus preserved was the speeches of the litigants and their supporters; but that is exactly what took place, and the fact is the strongest testimony to the surpassing fondness of the Greeks for beauty and appropri-



ateness of form. It happens that we can trace the early history of artistic oratory with some completeness and detail. The earlier specimens that have come down to us are very elaborate and artificial; we find all sorts of tricks of style, alliteration, rhyme, inverse order, exact balance of clauses, even to correspondence in the number of syllables, and so on. The so-called "Sophists," particularly Gorgias and Protagoras, both non-Athenians, are the chief examples of this tendency. But the Athenian taste is severer; Antiphon, the earliest example of a really Attic orator known to us, is formal and stiff, with a prim exactness that reminds us constantly of the archaic sculpture that had been out of fashion at Athens and elsewhere for seventy-five years. How the famous orators of the earlier fifth century spoke, Themistocles, Pericles, and the rest, we have no means of knowing. Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* gives several speeches as by Pericles; but they are not likely to be even remotely of the style of Pericles, for Thucydides makes all his characters speak essentially alike, all in his own involved and complicated, though often forcible and impressive, style. Thucydides was banished from Athens in 424, and remained in exile twenty years. While he was away the style not only of oratory but of all prose writing underwent an amazing change. It seems hardly possible that the speeches composed by Thucydides for the characters in his history and those written by Lysias can belong to nearly the same period. In actual time of composition they are nearly contemporaneous; in spirit they are a whole generation apart.

By the beginning of the fourth century B.C., the ascendancy of Attic prose was so complete that poetry, while still produced in great quantity, was not only no longer the dominant feature in Greek Literature, but showed no really new types. The fourth century is thus essentially an epoch of prose. Unfortunately we cannot judge fairly of the many eminent historians of that epoch, because their works have mostly

perished; but of the greatest orators we have abundant remains, the most completely representative being Isocrates, who may well be called the father of the essay and the political pamphlet, and the incomparable Demosthenes. And a happy chance has preserved the works of Plato practically complete.

Plato, again, brilliantly illustrates the Greek, specifically the Attic, ability to appropriate and utterly transform ideas from foreign sources. Sophron of Syracuse had given literary form to the *Mimos*, or dramatic sketch in the form of simple dialogue, in which the chief stress was laid upon the delineation of character. Antique tradition has much to say of Plato's fondness for these mimes; a malicious legend even says that his "Dialogues" are mere copies of Sophron. This of course is impossible, though Plato may have owed much to his Sicilian models. It is inconceivable that any such productions can have approached the beauty of Plato's style. That is unique, as the man himself stands alone in the history of Literature, the poet who eschews verse and on moral grounds objects to the whole tribe of poets, the aristocrat of aristocrats who despises the social and political distinctions of his own time, the mystic and seer who makes his characters talk in the everyday language of the elegant Athenian world. Santayana is, I think, right when he says: "It was after all but the love of beauty that made him censure the poets; for like a true Greek and a true lover he wished to see beauty flourish in the world." The speech is of a kind possible only in a highly cultivated urban society, which prides itself on perfect control of a subtle and idiomatically difficult medium of intercourse. It shows the Attic language at its very best: wonderfully flexible, abounding in particles to show the subtlest changes of meaning, sensitive to the shifting moods of the speaker, averse to bombast and involved constructions, apparently careless yet always entirely conscious of itself. The possibilities of such a language, and Plato's

command of it and of all the resources of style as well as his marvelous drawing of character, are best shown in the 'Symposium,' that matchless dialogue in which one after another of the most prominent men of the literary circle at Athens is made to speak in his own favorite manner, only to be out-done by Socrates, who lifts the whole discussion of the nature of Eros to an immeasurably higher plane.

Of all Greek prose authors, Plato seems to me to lose most in translation. The very elements which make his style so interesting are those least reproducible in a modern language except at the sacrifice of other elements hardly less important. At times one of the easiest writers to comprehend, he is again most difficult and elusive; his moods change as rapidly as those of Chopin, and the interpreter of the one needs as exact knowledge and as profound and intimately sympathetic understanding as the performer of the other.

After the Macedonian conquest literary production indeed went on unchecked; and the post-classical Literature, *i.e.* the Literature from 300 B.C. to 200 A.D. or thereabouts, that has survived equals or surpasses in extent all that we have received of the older Greek Literature. In substance a great deal of it is of the first importance; Plutarch alone would suffice to acquit Greek Literature of the Roman period from the charge of being uninteresting. But the task of Greek writers, poets and prosaists alike, as molders of style and creators of types, was practically done when Demosthenes, in flight from the Athens he had loved and struggled for so well, ended his life in 322. How well that task had been performed we may understand when we reflect that the types and forms of their creation have proved to be no mere cold and unapproachable show-pieces, but patterns susceptible of modification and adaptation to the needs of age after age, and so, with all their changes, have remained ever the same living force.

## VI

### LATIN LITERATURE

BY NELSON GLENN MCCREA, PROFESSOR OF LATIN

It has been commonly recognized that Latin Literature has two distinct claims upon the attention of the modern mind. It records on the one hand the interpretation of human life reached by a great nation, whose disciplined bravery conquered the known world and whose juristic and administrative genius then slowly worked out the idea of a single imperial nationality for all the diverse peoples of its wide domain. This conception of the possible political unity of mankind, first partially and but momentarily realized in the empire of Alexander the Great, was discerned again by Polybius as he sought to understand the reasons why in half a century the civilized world had fallen under the sway of Rome. In the train of conquest followed organization, and with two exceptions, the Greek and the Jew, ultimate assimilation. A common language sufficiently flexible to adjust itself to the new demands made upon it, a common law whose development had long been profoundly influenced by the Stoic doctrine of an eternal law of nature superior in its authority to any specific human legislation, the movements of trade and commerce made possible by the widespread *pax Romana*, all tended to bind closely together the manifold elements of the Empire. Caracalla's extension of Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Roman world, though not so intended, was but a natural recognition of existing conditions. "The Syrian, the Pannonian, the Briton, the Spaniard, was proud to call him-

self a Roman." And presently with this idea of a civil unity there came to be most intimately associated the idea of a religious unity, so that for centuries the belief in the eternal existence of the Church carried with it as a necessary consequence a belief in the endless duration of the Empire. For thousands of human beings Rome thus came to be a spiritual idea rather than a definitely localized city. Strange, indeed, it would be if the Literature of a nation so virile, so constructive, whose career determined the whole subsequent course of Western European history, were not at least sufficiently expressive of the national genius to command our most serious consideration.

But there is another aspect of Latin Literature of the greatest historical importance. It was Rome who assimilated and transmitted to the western world the culture of Greece. During those five hundred years in which the city on the Tiber gradually fought her way from the position of a struggling little community in the midst of menacing neighbors to the assured control of the whole Italian peninsula, the Greeks, already possessed of their Homer, invented and brought to perfection in various parts of the Greek-speaking world the fundamental types of literary expression in poetry and in prose. It was practically inevitable that when, upon the conquest of Magna Græcia and through the later wars in Greece and in the Hellenized East, the ruling class at Rome became acquainted with the masterpieces of Greek art and letters, captive Greece should, in Horace's phrase, take captive her rude conqueror. A generation succeeded whose education from youth up was full of Greek influences. The younger Scipio Africanus, a man of wonderful ability, many-sidedness and taste, possessed of a most winning personality, became the leader of a circle of statesmen and writers who were confident of the nation's future, enthusiastic over the new culture, and convinced that the language might most surely and most swiftly be molded into the medium for a great na-

tional literature by the close study of Greek models. The tide of Hellenism came to its flood in the prose of Cicero and the poetry of Vergil, the one the most widely cultivated mind of all antiquity, the other, in Bacon's words, "the chastest poet and royalest that to the memory of man is known," and both, in the influence which they exerted alike upon the minds of the generations which immediately followed them and in the intellectual life of Western Europe since the Renaissance, as all pervasive as Latinity itself. The unity of the Empire and the ease of communication between its parts led to the wide diffusion of this Græco-Roman culture throughout the provinces. It was an integral element in the life of the new nationalities, and even the reëtrance upon the scene in the fifteenth century of the Greek originals themselves failed to deprive it of its primacy as a formative power. It was still the Latin writers who were models of style and whose ideas swayed the development of art and letters. Not until the eighteenth century did Greek come really into its own.

One of the fruits of the nineteenth century was the formulation and wide application of the historical and comparative method in the study of all the results of human activity. To the investigators and critics who thus followed the stream of Literature back to its fountain heads this second aspect of Latin Literature seemed to be of paramount significance. The unquestioned indebtedness of Rome to Greece in all the technique of form, the constant and, at times, even minute use by the Latin writer of the rich material gathered in the earlier Literature seemed to these students to make Latin at the best but a pale and ineffectual reflex of the Greek. But already there is evidence that a different and saner view will presently obtain. It is being pointed out that we cannot thus estimate Latin Literature without including in the same condemnation much of that which is most justly admired in our modern literatures. When once the literary types have

been worked out, there remains but one possible originality, an originality of personality and spirit. Man is inevitably the heir of the ages, and "with the process of the suns" the elements for which he is indebted to the past become as inevitably ever more and more numerous. Even the "Iliad" is now recognized to be a highly artificial production and to presuppose a long anterior period of poetic activity. It has been proven again and again, as, for instance, in the case of the plots of Shakspeare's plays, that a poet may borrow material from others without in any way impairing his own claim to eminent or even preëminent merit. For the supreme test of a great work of art must be found in its unflinching power to give noble pleasure to minds that are sensitive to such beauty, and not in the answer to the question whether the artist has gotten from existing sources the material into which he has himself put this subtle magic. Judged by such a standard rather than by that of their genetic relation to their predecessors, the place of the names that are the glory of Latin Literature may be regarded as having long since been fixed by the consensus of opinion of successive generations. More than this, recent studies are revealing with increasing clearness that, while not only in form and rhythm but also (especially in the case of the poets) in idea, phrase, and color they drew freely upon their models, the spirit and total effect of their work is essentially Roman and not Greek. With some striking exceptions, chiefly in the field of the drama, this work reflects the environment of the writer, social, political, or religious, and gives expression to the spirit of the time, its moods, gay or severe, its aspirations, self-criticism, or despair. Nævius and Ennius both fought for Rome in the field before they composed their national epics. Horace, in the opinion of a distinguished French critic, M. Pierron, "est, si je l'ose ainsi dire, le siècle d'Auguste en personne." The appeal of Vergil's "Æneid" to his countrymen was so immediate that to them not Æneas but the Roman

people itself was the real hero. We walk the very streets of Rome and note the manner of the passing throng with Juvenal and Martial. Even Lucretius, who seems so detached a personality, and who is so proud, after the manner of all true Epicureans, of his absolute dependence upon the scrolls of his revered master, produced a poem which is, as Professor John Veitch said some time ago, "a type in the world of thought of the irrepressible Roman spirit of absolute sovereignty and love of orderly rule in the world of practical life and action." And this Roman spirit shows itself not only in the conquering toil with which the masses of disparate phenomena that prove to him the invariable order of natural law are finally marshaled in a coherent and interrelated series of arguments, but even more in the manner and temper with which this result is achieved. The literary movement of the time was already Alexandrine, with its love of carefully polished work in miniature, learned, romantic, and sentimental. But from the group of young poets of this school to which Catullus, Calvus, and Cinna belonged, Lucretius stood quite aloof. To his eager mind, intensely absorbed in the presentation of that philosophy which would insure in every recipient soul the dethronement of illusion, the reign of reason, most of their work must have seemed mere studied prettiness. How should a poet whose verse reveals an instinctive sympathy with forces that operate on a grand scale in illimitable space and in unending time concern himself with the ephemeral passions and ambitions of the moment? Catullus himself, who immortalizes this moment, was possessed of too vigorous, too Roman, a temperament to be fettered by his Alexandrian technique. Impassioned alike in love and in hate, whether personal or political, he uses a diction extraordinarily lucid and direct. In the longer elegies and in the epyllion on the "Marriage of Peleus and Thetis" there is unmistakable evidence of deliberate art and even artifice. But in the poems that are expressive of his own feeling — and no poet is more



egoistic — there is a spontaneity which cannot be matched in any other Latin poet, and the verse is most exquisitely adapted to the shifting phases of emotion.

The poem of Lucretius is in another way characteristically Roman. Epicurus had indeed “traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe whence he returns victorious to tell us what can, what cannot come into being — on what principle each thing has its powers defined, its deepset boundary mark.” But this quest had not been undertaken through any desire to enlarge the boundaries of science for its own sake. He had, on the contrary, a social aim, to secure the necessary foundation for the most indispensable and universal of all arts, the art of living. Such knowledge as was contributory to this end was of vital importance; all else might, at the best, serve to amuse an idle hour. In this limitation Epicurus is in no wise distinctively Greek. But with the normally constituted Roman the question of the practical results of his labors was always primary. Like Mr. Kipling’s typical American, he turned his face naturally to “the instant need of things” and turned it too with much the same “keen, untroubled” gaze. Horace, in the Epistle to Augustus in which he champions the modern school of Latin poetry as against the indiscriminate laudation of the classic dead, makes at one point a defense of poetry itself on purely utilitarian grounds. With characteristic irony, but in full appreciation of the current standard of value, he claims that the poetic temperament brings in its train many practical advantages. The poet is, at least, apt to be free from many common faults: —

“Rarely does avarice taint the tuneful mind.”

And in all seriousness he does good service to the State. In the education of the young and the comforting of the old, in the commending of a noble yet practicable rule of life, in the worship that wins for man the favor of heaven,

the poet plays a part that must secure him against the criticism of being a drone in the busy hive.

Cicero, too, found it necessary to justify on like grounds his interest and work in philosophy. That delight in the intellectual life for its own sake, that passion for inquiry and knowledge as the natural food of the human mind which Cicero so enthusiastically describes in a great passage in the last book of his "De Finibus," was by no means native in the Roman mind, and to the majority always appeared to be a vain thing. One recalls with amusement the story told about the proconsul Gellius, a contemporary of Cicero. This progressive governor, with a love of order truly and admirably Roman, called before him upon his arrival at Athens the representatives of the various schools of philosophy and, urging upon them the propriety of making a final adjustment of their differences, offered in perfect good faith his service as mediator. Panætius, the friend of the younger Scipio, and by far the most influential of all Greek thinkers in winning converts to Stoicism at Rome, gained his success by emphasizing, not the lofty but wholly theoretical conception of virtue held by the earlier Stoics, but an ideal which might be realized in actual life. The new doctrine found congenial soil, for the heroes of Roman tradition were, as has been pointed out, unconscious Stoics. It was found that this view of life, in its idea of a world order to which the individual was bound to conform, in its treatment of the deities of popular belief as manifestations of the one divine Being, in its insistence on the duties which every man owed to society and the State, was in essential harmony with some of the strongest elements in the national character. This theory could be definitely helpful in solving the problems of daily life. It might be used to reinforce the constraining power of the *mos maiorum*, as this was still felt in the organization of the family and the State. And if presently "the way of the fathers" should cease to be able to provide adequate sanction

for personal and civic morality (the Empire saw this danger realized in the extinction of liberty), philosophy might take its place altogether in maintaining the standard. Cicero is much concerned to make clear this practical value of its own labors in this field, to relate them not so much to human life in general as to the particular needs of his countrymen and their historical traditions, to show that, because of the discipline and breadth which it alone could give, the study of philosophy was for a self-governing people, and especially for the statesman and the publicist, a necessary complement of the regular training in literature, law, and oratory. In the series of volumes which appeared in rapid succession in the years 45 and 44 B.C., dealing in part with the criterion of knowledge, in part with the ethical standard, Cicero was, he conceived, meeting a practical need as certainly as in his earlier works on rhetoric and political science.

One of these earlier works, the treatise "On the State," has come down to us in a very fragmentary condition, but enough remains to enable us to form a definite idea of Cicero's political philosophy. The book offers a most instructive contrast to the famous "Republic" of Plato on which Cicero modeled his own work. The aim of both inquirers is substantially the same; namely, to ascertain the moral principles of an ideal polity and to describe its governmental form. But the earlier thinker, approaching the problem in the spirit of a speculative philosopher in search of the absolute good, works out with inflexible logic the consequences of that principle of justice which must be realized both in the State and in its citizens. The result is the construction of a marvelously intricate and interrelated social organism, a book crowded with ideas and ideals of permanent value. But the State, as specifically constituted, is wholly theoretical, at variance with all human experience and incapable of realization. The Roman, though he has a most engaging enthusiasm for great ideas, is far too completely the child of his race to put any

faith in a series of abstract ethical propositions and their necessary corollaries. He, too, describes an ideal State, but he is evidently, after all, idealizing an actually tested form of government; namely, the constitution of Rome as it existed in the time of the younger Scipio Africanus. He would fain in his own age have played the part of a Lælius to the Scipio of Pompey, and, as he looked back to those golden days, so different from the lowering present, it seemed to him that Polybius was right in thinking that Rome then possessed "the most beautiful framework of government of all that are in our times known."

Important as it was in Cicero's judgment that his countrymen should be made familiar with the subject-matter of Greek philosophy, it was no less important that these ideas should be presented in a style that would serve both to win for them a readier hearing and to enrich the Literature with an artistic form not hitherto represented. The undertaking bristled with difficulties. There was as yet in existence in Latin no treatment of philosophy in prose of the slightest scientific or literary value. Lucretius indeed had lived; but his work was in poetry, and dealt with one single school of thought and in the main with only one aspect, the physical and mechanical, of the teaching of even that school. It was necessary to create a philosophical vocabulary; and, while even the plastic Greek had only in the hands of a long succession of thinkers become wholly adequate for the expression of abstract thought, Latin, a language which finds perhaps the most striking monument of its purely native capacity in the objective concreteness of Cæsar's "Commentaries," had to be made through the genius of a single worker an instrument of like power. The notable success which was achieved would no doubt have been impossible if Cicero had not profited to the utmost by the terminology already worked out in Greek. Even so considered, it was an amazing feat, the far-reaching importance of which did not appear until long after

his death. For, as the event proved, it was Cicero who made possible the Latinity of the Church Fathers from Minucius Felix to Saint Augustine, and to whom the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages owed the medium requisite for its expression.

Whence came this marvelous power over language, which from the days of Quintilian, his ardent admirer, made Cicero the most potent influence in Roman education, which in the Renaissance captivated Petrarch, and, through that great movement in which Petrarch was the leader, placed Cicero in his commanding position as a literary artist? The answer must be found in the development of oratory at Rome. In Tacitus's "Dialogue" on this subject, it is pointed out in defense of the oratory of the Republic and of Cicero as its greatest representative that "it may be said of eloquence, as of a flame, that it requires motion to excite it, fuel to feed it, and that it brightens as it burns." For "the mental powers of the orator rise with the dignity of his subject and no one can produce a noble and brilliant speech unless he has an adequate case." As Tacitus was only too well aware, great eloquence is most intimately connected with the vigor and freedom of national life. When that life is instinct with great ideas and principles, when the minds and passions of men are deeply stirred by political and social movements of grave import to the commonwealth, the conditions are most favorable for a native eloquence, and, if training be added, for a great style. In the survey of the development of Roman oratory which Cicero has given to us in the "Brutus," it is clear that, from the day when Appius Claudius Cæcus made against the conclusion of a peace with Pyrrhus the first published speech in Roman annals, the fiercely disputed questions of internal and foreign policy and the sessions of the law-courts resulted in a continuous improvement of a practical art, which was most congenial to the Roman temperament. The elder Cato, Gaius Gracchus, Crassus and Antonius, the

teachers of Cicero in his youth, Hortensius, his great rival at the bar, "the king of the courts," mark the steps of a progress from rude natural effectiveness to artistic excellence that we can ourselves trace even in the tantalizingly few fragments of their speeches which have been preserved. With Cicero our data become abundant, for there are extant fifty-seven out of over one hundred speeches which he delivered. These speeches, studied in connection with his masterly treatises on the ideal orator, prove that not only did he bring Latin prose style to the highest point of formal development, but also that in one very real sense he may actually be called its founder. The earlier orators, it is true, had learned much from Greek rhetoricians, alive and dead, about the harmony which should exist between form and content, but Cicero was the first to work out and to use on a large scale a comprehensive theory of oratory as a fine art, in so far as it might be capable of realization in Roman life and in the Latin tongue. This theory was the slow fruition of close study of Greek masters and masterpieces, and he is peculiarly indebted to Isocrates, to whom, in fact, in Greek Literature also all subsequent prose-writers were ultimately indebted for the rhythmical swell of the periodic sentence. By the most intense and unremitting application, by the devotion of a lover to his art, Cicero made himself a consummate master of rhetorical structure, of phrase, and of cadence. Neither Flaubert nor Stevenson ever worked more passionately than he to achieve style, to cast his thoughts into such a form as to satisfy at once the critical mind and the critical ear. The prose which he thus perfected was naturally the prose of the orator, the prose of one who addressed an actual audience. When later he began to adapt it to meet the needs of the treatise and the essay, it was still a prose that was shaped to yield its meaning and its charm on the first reading. In fact, even those of his works that were intended to be read rather than to be heard are cast in the form of the dialogue. The

same tone naturally appears in his Letters. Their vivacity and changing moods reproduce the movement of animated conversation, and in nothing that he has left to us is the sureness and ease of his control of the language more striking. His correspondents, men of distinction though they were, fall markedly below his level.

In that dialogue of Tacitus to which I have already referred, it is claimed by the admirer of the republican oratory that, "while the style of Cæsar is the more transparent, the style of Cicero is the more impassioned, the richer, the more forcible." As none of Cæsar's speeches has survived, we have no means of verifying the estimate of Cicero, who places him in the very first rank, but we are probably justified in forming some idea of the secret of his success through his "Commentaries" on the Gallic and Civil wars. These "materials for the study of history" are presented in a manner that, for its purity of idiom, lucidity, and terseness, is, as Cicero says in the "Brutus," the despair of professed historians. Still, unadorned as is the style, the sentences flow and are woven together into a continuous web. But already a different ideal of writing had found its great representative. Historical composition had begun at Rome with the "Origins" of the elder Cato, whose motto had been "make sure of the sense, and the words will follow." The practical value of history was evident to the Roman mind, and this field was accordingly much cultivated. Under the Empire, indeed, the historians became the foremost representatives of prose. But historiography developed slowly; and Sallust, contemporary with Cicero and Cæsar, was the first to use a scientific method and an artistic form. Attracted by Thucydides rather than by Isocrates, he worked out a new type of Latin prose style, highly compressed in thought and in expression, abrupt and epigrammatic. He is a lover of the words and phrases of a bygone age, with a special fondness for Cato. His sentences, for the most part short and simple in

their structure, follow one another staccato fashion. Quintilian speaks admiringly of his "immortal swiftness." It is a style quite conscious of its own art, which it by no means attempts to conceal. Next to Cicero, Sallust is the chief model in prose for the following centuries. Tacitus learned of him, and still later, in an archaizing age, he is highly regarded by Fronto and by Gellius.

The two fundamentally opposed ideals of form which came to expression in the prose of Cicero and of Sallust, respectively, were destined to receive under the Empire a most characteristic and most splendid realization in the historical work of two geniuses of the first rank. The governing factor in the development of republican prose had been the need, imperative in spoken discourse, of being understood at once, as the words succeeded one another. The style had to be fused with the thought, and, like it, had to be such as to win instant appreciation. But with the loss of freedom and the decline of oratory conditions changed. The appeal was then made even more to a reading than to a listening public. The gentle reader might linger over the art of the writer, and this art in turn might be made so intricate in its nice balance of phrase and clause, so daring in the compactness of its thought and structure, so subtly suggestive in the literary associations of its diction, as to reveal its full charm and power only after some attentive consideration. It is in this fashion that Livy continues the Ciceronian tradition, and Tacitus the Sallustian. The two men are as wide apart in temperament and method as they are different in manner. Judged by modern standards, Livy is in no sense a scientific historian. To examine, whenever possible, original sources, to sift with a critical and open mind a mass of conflicting evidence, to search for the truth with an austere disregard of the possible resultant destruction of one's own cherished opinions, all this was alien to his enthusiastic soul. He never consciously misrepresents the facts, but he is es-



sentially a hero-worshiper, and his greatest hero is the Roman Commonwealth itself. "Fallen on evil times," as he thinks, he idealizes the great past, and, conceiving, as we read in his famous preface, that it is the function of history to teach good citizenship, he is unconsciously predisposed to accept that form of the story which will enable him to point his moral most effectively. Yet such is his innate sympathy and kinship with the elements of character which made Rome great that, notwithstanding grave deficiencies, his work has an enduring truth and value. It is really a prose epic, written in a style of extraordinary eloquence and picturesqueness. To the historian and to the lover of Literature alike the loss of over three-quarters of the entire work is certainly the greatest which Latin Literature has sustained.

A great modern historian, Leopold von Ranke, says of Tacitus: "If one yields to the impression made by his works, one is carried away by it. There is no trace in him of the manner and method of Greek historiography. He is Roman through and through, and indeed the master of all who have written before or since." Unlike Livy, Tacitus brought to the help of his historical investigation the practical training gained in a long and distinguished official career. In the opening paragraphs of the "Histories" and the "Annals" he avows his intention to write with perfect freedom from prejudice. A thorough aristocrat and lover of the old order, he saw, nevertheless, that the Empire was definitively established. He could even fully appreciate the enlightened rule of a Trajan. But the fifteen years of "silent servitude" under Domitian had permanently embittered his soul, and despite his best efforts the prevailing somberness of his thoughts profoundly influenced his judgment as a historian. Though by no means unerring in his analysis, he was endowed by nature with a marvelous power to trace the hidden springs of thought and action. His portrayal of character is subtle and vivid. The phrases bite as does the acid in etching. The style is charged

with imagination, and everywhere in the diction one sees the influence of Vergil, to whom alike as artist and as patriot his own personality was so closely akin.

Nothing in the whole range of Latin Literature illustrates more strikingly its close connection with the national character and the need of the time than the work of Rome's greatest poet. The long years of civil strife that terminated in the battle of Actium had exhausted Italy, had substituted factional bitterness for the sense of a common country and had made of slight effect the traditional moral and religious sanctions of civic conduct. Augustus and his ministers, confronted by the urgent need of reconstruction, called into play remedial forces of very varied kinds. Among these was Literature. Vergil's "Georgics" is not a poem born of the love of Nature for her own sake, — though Vergil shows such love, — nor does it treat of the life of man in the country in any cosmopolitan way. Italy is the theme and the Roman virtues and strength of character fostered by the hard struggle with the reluctant yet bountiful earth. For agriculture was, if possible, to be again honorably esteemed, as in the days when Cincinnatus left his plow to guide the State. The poem is the quintessence of long musing on the subject in one of the loveliest parts of Italy and of a study of the effects of word and phrase that was almost microscopic. The fruit of seven full years of labor was a poem of 2200 lines — less, on the average, than a line a day. But this poem at once made its author the object "of a people's hope." And this hope was justified in the "Æneid." Here Vergil shows himself to be one of that very small number of poets who appeal to the universal heart of man. No other poem in the world's Literature is more many-sided, no other has played so large a part in the mental life of so many generations of men. Yet Vergil was far from consciously writing for any such audience. He "sounds forever of Imperial Rome," whose finer life he strove adequately to express and to quicken.

Possessed in the highest degree of that catholic receptivity which both Polybius and Posidonius noted as among the admirable qualities of the Roman mind, he used as by natural right the imaginative interpretation of human life of his great predecessors, whether Greek or Roman. But he puts upon all the stamp of his own personality, essentially Roman in his purpose and totality of effect, even where the material is most Homeric.

"Our wills are ours, to make them Thine." It would be impossible to define here the full significance of the "*Æneid*." Professedly a poem of action, it is in fact a musing upon the mystery of human life, upon its infinite pathos, its uncertain issue, its permitted greatness. To the modern world, with its apotheosis of the individual man, *Æneas*, as Vergil has drawn him, is apt to seem rather a concept than a real human being. Yet he incarnates the virtues upon which, to the poet's mind, depended the realization of the high hopes of the new order. The age had learned to its cost the meaning of personal ambition. Vergil held up to it the contrasted picture of patience, self-control, and obedience to the divine call. Through such forgetfulness of self, and through this alone, it had been possible to lay the foundations of the State; through the same high devotion Rome had grown great. In no other way could her life be preserved and enriched for the generations to come.

Horace, Vergil's contemporary, is in another way equally the child of his age and responsive to the movement of the time. Between the Homeric *Odysseus* and the Vergilian *Æneas*, says Sainte-Beuve, "*l'urbanité était née*." Horace, as ready in his address as Vergil was shy and awkward, is, in a special sense, the representative in Latin Literature of this temper and manner. It is not, of course, peculiar to his works. We admire it also, for instance, in the distinguished Romans who figure in Cicero's dialogue "*On the Orator*." In

the poet's familiar "Talks" and "Letters" we are listening to an accomplished man of the world. Fully aware of the difficulties which beset the pathway of life, he criticizes with kindly humor and tolerance the foibles and errors of others, and derives from his own an amusement which he shares with his readers. Yet, with all this gaiety of tone, he pursues, true Roman that he is, a very practical end; namely, the determination of the principles by which one may order one's life aright. The teaching of the schools gave him, no doubt, greater breadth of view, but Horace's philosophy of life is ultimately the outcome of that habit of shrewd observation of courses of action and their results which his father had so sedulously fostered. It finds expression even in his lyric poetry, on which his fame as a great literary artist chiefly rests. "The light that never was on sea or land" comes not to him. But if, even in the "Odes," we have "the light of common day," it is none the less a world touched with the hues of fancy and with man's finer tastes and hopes. Like Vergil, he is in full sympathy with the efforts of the new régime to restore the ideals of the past. The noble series of odes that opens the third book is in effect a single poem in which Horace commends "*virginibus puerisque*" the moral qualities that should be theirs, both as individuals and as citizens of Rome.

"The marked peculiarity of Roman constitutional history," says Professor James S. Reid, "is its unbroken evolution, whereby a mode of government which originally sprang up in connection with a small town community was gradually adapted for the direction of a widespread empire. No violent breach of continuity is to be found in the whole course of the changes which passed over the political existence of Rome from the dawn of its history to its latest phases." One may and one should, I think, find in Latin Literature the reflection of the same continuously developing national life. A number of instances have been discussed to show the intimate rela-

tion that existed between these two things. But a few cases only have been taken out of a possible many. One might go farther and point out how in the early days of the Literature the rollicking fun and wit of Plautus assume forms which could not possibly have been derived from his Greek originals and whose spirit is truly Italian; how Terence gave to the still undisciplined language a polish that delighted even the critical taste of the Ciceronian age and justly prided himself upon being a well of "Latin undefiled." One might note the brilliancy with which Ovid's verse mirrors the gay, cultivated, and cynical society of the world's capital in the beginning of the Imperial era. Juvenal's pitiless indictment of his time must be corrected by the cheerful optimism of the younger Pliny, who is as circumstantial in his praise of the persons and things that were good as is Juvenal in his indignation with the persons and things that were evil. And so one might deal with many a name. The language, too, shows a homogeneous growth from the writers of the third century before Christ to Boëthius in the sixth century A.D. Inherently sonorous and dignified, inherently logical in the structure of its sentences, as, for instance, in the predominating use of the principle of subordination as against that of coördination, it reflects in point after point the mental traits of the people that used it. If it is ever true that "*le style est l'homme*," then one must see in the Latin language and its Literature the unmistakable impress of the race whose consummate genius was for law and order and government.

"Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento —  
Hæc tibi erunt artes — pacisque imponere morem,  
Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos."

## VII

### THE MIDDLE AGES

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WHEN we attempt to summarize the literary achievement of the Middle Ages, we are forced by cruel necessity to begin with a definition. What is meant by "the medieval period," — that is to say, within what limits of time shall it be inclosed? While we cannot settle the question dogmatically, it is important that we should be agreed at the outset, and have a perfectly clear idea of what we are discussing. Our forefathers would have felt no doubts about this matter. They viewed the Middle Ages as a dreary void, destitute of literature or art worth serious consideration, extending from the decay of classical letters to the revival of learning. "The fierceness of Gothick humours," as Sir William Temple quaintly put it, was supposed to have stifled culture completely. But since we have come to see in the poetry of the early Germanic peoples a grave beauty and simplicity rivaling that of the classics, and in the feudal period following, a splendor and picturesqueness which the Elizabethan Age can hardly equal, we must acknowledge that "the Middle Ages" is indeed a misleading title. These ten centuries from 500 to 1500 are worthy of a better name, although the old one still survives in common use. We are dealing not merely with a transition period, preparing the way for better things to come, but with an age containing a rich and varied literature of its own.

It is, furthermore, most unsatisfactory to treat this interval of a thousand years or so as a single era. For it is not a homogeneous whole; it falls into two periods distinct from each other in almost every way. The Norman Conquest of England may stand as a boundary line, marking the turning-point of those far-reaching changes in Western Europe with which we are all familiar. The phenomena were complex, and not merely those of literary evolution. European history, political, social, religious, linguistic, and literary, was beginning afresh. The whole structure of society was shifting; the feudal system, which had been gradually supplanting the old social order, now revealed its full strength, and sharp caste distinctions began to prevail. Christianity united men in a common interest as never before, through the splendid folly of the Crusades. As a political institution, the medieval church attained the summit of its glory in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Its idealism, in the midst of much material prosperity, was fittingly symbolized in its cathedrals, the noblest achievements of medieval architecture. Radical changes were taking place in the languages of the Western nations; it is hardly necessary to speak of the beginning of the Middle English and Middle High German periods, and the emergence of the Romance dialects in literature. In brief, the twelfth century marked an advance in almost every branch of human activity.

Particularly striking is the leadership of France. After 1100, she became the acknowledged sovereign of the literatures of Western Europe. For the next five centuries the sister nations, now settled in approximately their present positions after long years of unrest, were content to listen to stories from her lips. Never was there a better illustration of that social quality, that element of universality, which Brunetière found the most striking characteristic of French Literature. France borrowed much from abroad, but she purified it of its dross, and returned it, transformed and transfigured,

to the people whence it came. The Middle English metrical romances were mere imitations of French models; the great Middle High German masters, Gottfried, Wolfram, and Hartmann, looked avowedly to France for their material; Roland was hardly less celebrated in Italy than in his native land; and far-away Iceland translated into its vernacular the romantic stories of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. In form as well as in subject-matter France had much to teach. From Provence in the south came the poetry of elaborate rhyme and graceful compliment; from the north came epic verse, with its marching assonances and stately movement. The old alliterative measures had run their course. In a word, the imaginative Literature of Europe in the feudal period is largely the reflection in the surrounding countries of the achievements of France.

It may be said, then, that at this time, a little after the Norman Conquest, the medieval period had, in the truest sense, its beginning. The most characteristic productions of the Middle Ages sprang from the fusion of the Germanic and the Romance peoples, from the union of what was best in barbarian and in classic stock. Much of what preceded, in the so-called Dark Ages, was really a survival of classic thought, as in Boethius, or of Germanic paganism, as "Beowulf." That was the true transition period. The richest treasures of Medieval Literature came later, in the more complete amalgamation of the two elements which had long struggled for supremacy. Both had gained the victory. The barbarian triumphed over Roman power, but later, in the emergence of the Romance nations, the old Latin stock was "born again" into a new vigor. And it is this rebirth, three centuries or so earlier than the time we call the Renaissance, which gives the era its peculiar distinction in art, in architecture, in philosophy, and in religion, as well as in literature.

In the following discussion, then, I propose to consider this second division of the Middle Ages, extending from about the



year 1100 to the full Renaissance. This period is fairly homogeneous and distinct; it is possible to sum up its more striking characteristics in a definite way. Its close, however, is not so satisfactorily determined as its beginning. The passing of the medieval spirit takes place at different times in different countries; in Italy about a hundred years earlier than in the sister nations. No rigid division is possible; medievalism fades gradually in the dawn of the Renaissance. But its essential qualities are none the less clear on this account. So well defined are they that common usage is more and more coming to regard this later time as "the medieval period." As Professor Ker says, "When the term 'medieval' is used in modern talk, it almost always denotes something which first took shape in the twelfth century." So, too, when Professor Beers gives as one definition of romanticism "the reproduction, in modern art or literature, of the life and thought of the Middle Ages," he means, if I understand him aright, the life and thought of the feudal period. It is on the Age of Chivalry, then, that we shall fix our attention here.

The literature of the aristocracy illustrates best the changes from the age preceding. Medieval romance, which swept everything before it as a literary fashion, was determined mainly by the upper classes. The literature of the clergy and that of the commons represents less of a break with earlier traditions. To understand the characteristics of the medieval romantic spirit, as distinguished from the romantic spirit in other times, whatever that elusive quality may be, one must look at the work of such writers as Chrétien de Troyes, Benoit de Ste. More, or Marie de France; a far cry indeed from the poetry of the Dark Ages. The difference lies partly in externals, and partly in social ethics. On the one hand is a society more or less like that described by Tacitus in the "Germania"; on the other, one similar to that in the pages of Froissart. Unlike as were the times of Clovis

and Charlemagne, they belong together as against those of William the Conqueror and St. Louis. The very sumptuousness of the later age reveals this, the increased splendor of dwellings, of garments, of feasts, of churches. The court of an Edward the Third, with its rich costumes, its ladies in silk and cloth of gold, its music of many instruments, its glittering armor, its tapestries, its painted windows, — all this is far more “romantic” than that of an Alfred, where everything was simpler and cruder, less for show, and more for use. A certain studied picturesqueness is a constant characteristic of the later period. Not so in the earlier age; when Sigurd came to the halls of Gjuki and received Gudrun as a bride, the “Poetic Edda” merely tells us that her dowry was rich, and that men drank and caroused for days. Contrast such scenes in the “Nibelungenlied,” where the old story has been decked out with feudal magnificence, Arabian stuffs and dazzling gold on every hand. The earlier poets were chiefly interested in the action and its consequences; the later ones quite as much in the stage-setting and the accessories. Chaucer even anticipates blame for omitting such descriptions, when a wedding comes into the story: —

“Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,  
That for my necligence I do no cure  
To tellen yow the Ioye and al tharray  
That at the feste was that ilke day.”

And in the “Knight’s Tale,” we feel, as we do in reading its source from the pen of Boccaccio, that the whole is not so much a story as a series of gorgeous tapestries. It is not, then, so much the addition of strangeness to beauty, upon which Pater and other critics have insisted, as the addition of sumptuousness to beauty, which characterizes the romantic narratives of this age. There was magic and mystery enough in the earlier period; Mirkwood, through which the swan-maidens flew, was as much enchanted as the forest of

Broceliande. The swan-maiden was a primitive sort of lady, however, content with a garment of feathers, while the starry-eyed damsel of Arthurian story is quite inconceivable without her robes of azure and gold.

But it is not chiefly in externals that the romantic spirit of this period lies. The system of chivalry introduced the most striking changes in social ethics. Now, as before, the natural occupation of the hero was war, but war carried on in a far different spirit. An age which had thought disloyalty of a warrior to his chief the deepest disgrace was succeeded by one in which obedience was secured mainly by brute force, and treachery was held venial sin. This change is well seen in the *chansons de geste*. In the "Song of Roland," devotion to land and sovereign is second only to duty to God, while the later chansons are full of the struggles of the barons against the king. Roland fought for God and sweet France; the knight of later days for Woman and his own sweet self. And that brings us to the second great change, the transformation of the love-element. It is sometimes said that affairs of the heart were less regarded in the earlier age. There was love-interest enough in Germanic poetry, however; one thinks of Brynhild, Hilde, Gudrun, Hildeguthe,—but theirs was a love devoid of sentimentality and affectation. And no matter how ardent the devotion of the Germanic hero, he always felt himself the master. It was the woman's part to give obedience. Even the Valkyrie Brynhild forfeited her supremacy by marriage. On the other hand, a greater exaltation of Woman than that accorded her in the feudal period could scarcely be desired by the most ardent modern champion of her rights. Beautiful, haughty, and disdainful, she demanded that man be her servant and her slave. Her consent was finally granted out of pity for her lover, frequently as a sort of remedial measure, lest his love-sickness should prove fatal. Roland himself, the most unsentimental of heroes, became in a later age Orlando Innamorato or Orlando Furioso,

—raging mad for love! Both in love and war, then, the man of the later Middle Ages was an individualist, while the earlier hero fixed his simple thoughts on the larger issues, bloody and bestial though they sometimes were.

One of the strangest features of the feudal period is its passion for form and convention, which we are wont to consider antithetic to the romantic ideal. In the romantic revolt of the eighteenth century, for instance, the reaction against formal rules of poetry and life is most striking. Such a protest as this was no part of the medieval romantic program. As far as convention was concerned, the Middle Ages were far more hampered than classic times, though in a different way. One might, indeed, almost call the key-note of the era of chivalry its love of system. In the deepest interests of life it was controlled very largely by convention, careful of the esteem of the world, anxious to have the universe reduced to rule.

This formalism manifests itself strikingly in the two motives most prominent in its narrative literature, love and war, and equally so in a third motive, religion. Chivalry and sacerdotal celibacy imposed their unnatural restrictions on the three most vital relations of life: man's attitude towards his fellow-men, towards women, and towards God. Chivalry was in some ways immoral; it exalted illicit passion, and confined healthy love in a strait-jacket of etiquette. Moreover, the typical love-affair was often a ridiculously affected procedure, a mixture of valentine sentimentality and erotic grandiloquence. Its formulas crystallize into allegory in such a work as the "Romance of the Rose," where set rules for making love are to be found.

"It is the Romance of the Rose,  
Which doth Love's gentle art inclose."

The tremendous vogue of love-allegory is typical of this artificiality in the later Middle Ages. Even such healthy and

natural spirits as Chaucer and Dunbar were deeply affected by it. Hand in hand with this went the passion for more realistic though not less formal analysis of the heart. Rousseau was not more minutely painstaking in the self-searchings of his "Confessions" than was Dante in the "Vita Nuova." The great Italian did not disdain to set forth the physiological manifestations accompanying his passion for Beatrice, to explain the operations of "the natural spirit," and "the animal spirit," or to dissect the songs which he composed in her honor.

Again, consider the formalism of medieval warfare and medieval religion. There is not a little analogy between the unwieldy armor in which the knight ensconced himself, and the absurd conventions which weighed him down. The artificial rules of the tournament were observed in many cases even in serious fighting. This lasted until the rise of the yeoman infantry, when mounted knights, those huge unwieldy iron towers, were hopelessly at a disadvantage. As Froissart says of the battle of Poitiers, "whenever any one fell, he had little chance of getting up again." In one engagement the warriors were aggrieved, we are told, because their opponents did not clothe themselves in defenses as cumbrous as their own. They had not "played fair" in the game of war. The same passion for system is observable in the Church. The Scholastic philosophy aimed to justify theology by the exercise of pure reason. Even in the Mystic movement, that plea for emotion in religion, which became in later times a protest against Scholasticism, there was a strange artificiality. The very stages by which the soul was to attain perfect communion with the Divine were exactly determined. The reaction of liberalism against formalism could not escape formalism itself. This persistence of allegory is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of Medieval Literature. While often employed ineffectively and inartistically, it was used by master hands with tremendous effect. And this effect was

gained partly because the metaphorical habit of thought was natural to the writer, and in no wise inconsistent with perfect sincerity. There is no better illustration of this than the "Divine Comedy." In other ages the allegory is generally frankly a convention. Consider, for example, the work of Boethius or Bunyan. The maiden who brings consolation to Boethius in his affliction is never felt to have any real existence. She is a mere abstraction personified. In "Pilgrim's Progress," Mr. Worldly Wiseman and the Giant Despair are, excepting for juvenile readers, only symbols of the materialism and despondency which assail the Christian hero. But to Dante the circles of Hell had a reality of their own; could one actually visit the abodes of the dead, such might be the sights he would see. The wonderful thing is, then, that the Middle Ages were sometimes actually convinced of the existence of the artificial conventions which they had themselves developed, whether in love, in war, or in religion. The symbol had become a reality.

In criticizing the artificiality of the feudal period we must not forget its virtues. It represented a very real advance over the Dark Ages in all the refinements of life. Gentleness, courtesy, and humility were its watchwords. It had high ideals, partly shaped by the Christian faith, which are well symbolized by the Quest of the Holy Grail. None but the knight who was pure of heart could behold the sacred cup. It was forever denied to Launcelot, because of his sinful love for Guenevere. And as the story developed, one hero was found too worldly, and another set up in his place. Twice this happened: Gawain was dethroned to make way for Perceval, who in his turn was succeeded by Galahad, the saintliest of medieval knights. There is no better summary of the ideals of the best romances than a passage in Caxton's preface to the "Morte Darthur." It may well stand as a refutation of old Roger Ascham's accusation that the whole pleasure of the book "standeth in open manslaughter and

bold bawdry." Caxton says his work has been done "to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honor, and how they that were vicious were punished, and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see and read in thissaid book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee." These virtues which Caxton emphasizes are typical of the advance of the ideals of the feudal period over those of Germanic heathendom. The Anglo-Saxon chief exulted with bitter and mocking mirth in the defeat and death of his foe; such courtesy and deference as Gawain's would have sickened him, and Gawain's attentions to women would have appeared still less in keeping with the character of a great warrior. As for the optimistic view that good prevails in the end, the earlier age knew little of it, holding rather to the pagan formula "Fate goeth ever as it will." Despite its defects, then, the era of chivalry made a great advance towards that delicacy of feeling, that ability to appreciate the point of view of others, which are characteristic of the gentleman of modern times. Its manners were artificial, but these very artificialities suppressed the headstrong violence of pagan days, and made true courtesy ultimately possible for the heart as well as for the head.

For sincerity and realism, however, we must look elsewhere than to the literature of the higher classes. When we speak of narratives of chivalry, we think first of those told for the

gentle-born, but it would be a grave mistake to judge mediæval story mainly from the tales in the castle hall. The fellow in russet under the walls had a greedy ear for a story, and unspoiled feelings for sentiment and pathos. He loved a tale of his betters, and told it with an appealing vigor which the most heroic of the romances lack. There is no better way of realizing the sincerity of popular literature than by comparing the romances, full of the artificial elaborations which we have just been observing, and the ballads, with their poverty of description and simplicity of form. Let us take a familiar ballad, "Child Waters":—

"Childe Watters in his stable stoode  
And stroaket his milke-white steede;  
To him came a faire young ladye  
As ere did weare womans weede."

No description of the knight, and the lady and the horse disposed of in three lines! When the heroine has her say she speaks from the heart:—

"Shee saies 'I had rather haue one kisse,  
Child Waters, of thy mouth,  
Than I wold haue Cheshire and Lancashire both,  
That lyes by north and south.

"And I had rather haue a twinkling,  
Child Waters, of your eye,  
Than I wold haue Cheshire and Lancashire both,  
To take them mine oun to bee!'"

The high-born lady acts otherwise. Listen to the coquetry of the heroine of Chrétien's "Yvain." Shesays to the knight:

"'Pray tell me why you are so humble.' [He answers] 'Lady, I am subdued by my heart, which is wholly yours; to these desires it has brought me.' [She replies] 'And what has subdued the heart, fair friend?' 'Lady, my eyes.' 'And what the eyes?' 'The great beauty which I see in you.' 'And how has beauty





"Your steid was auld, and ye hae got mair,  
    Edward, Edward,  
 Your steid was auld, and ye hae got mair,  
    Sum other dule ye drie O.'  
 'O I hae killed my fadir deir,  
    Mither, Mither,  
 O I hae killed my fadir deir,  
    Alas, and wae is mee O!'"

Here one feels the power of Nemesis as much as in Greek tragedy. This art the romance writers seldom gained. They borrowed much from popular narrative, but they never learned the value of restraint. A metrical romance would have preferred to multiply Edward's father into a thousand Saracens, and to dwell with glee on their thousand harrowing deaths. Apart from popular poetry, there is little true pathos in Medieval Literature.

One of the greatest charms of this poetry is its haunting rhythms. Made to be sung, and sung by unlettered folk, it lingers in the memory when the elaborate artifices of Minnesinger and Troubadour are forgotten. Its simple measures are often adjusted to the subject with a delicacy that is only felt after many readings. These measures are not always smooth and polished, as art-poets would have made them, and inkhorn copyists have kept them, but they produce effects that many a modern poet has vainly tried to reproduce. Even such poets as Rossetti, Scott, Keats, Coleridge, and Kipling have had only partial success. We are too artistic and too mannered nowadays to attain true ballad simplicity. But the peculiar coloring of this poetry is unforgettable. Its characteristic sadness comes out in the popular lyric as well: —

"Winter wakeneth all my care,  
 Now these leaves are waxing bare,  
 Oft I sigh and mourn full sore  
 When it cometh in my thought  
 How this world's joy goeth all for naught."

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And when we turn to Comedy, we find the popular Muse again supreme. The hearty laugh and the merry jest most often come, as might be expected, from the full throats of the lower classes. For the Hogarth picture of the Middle Ages we must turn to the *fabliaux*, those coarse and witty tales unfit for the ears of dames. It is a thousand pities that such masterly bits of narration, short stories in verse at a time when there were so few in prose, are so indecorous as to be impossible for modern readers. The romances show the age as it imagined itself to be; the *fabliaux*, as it really was. They ridiculed hypocrisy in the church and immorality in the relations of the sexes with biting irony, and took a wicked delight in the frailties of the smugly virtuous. They were essentially a French product, other nations lagging behind the brightness of Gallic wit. And they exercised a strong influence on more studied literary productions. When we trace medieval humor to its origins, even when a great artist has shaped it, we generally hear the voices of the people. Such men as Chaucer, Pulci, Rabelais, illustrate this admirably. In Chaucer's tales of the Reeve and Miller we recognize the technic of the *fabliau*. Rabelais shows book-learning refracted by popular irreverence, the same spirit which set wandering scholars, men of the middle classes, to parodying the offices of the Church. Pulci, really outside the limits of our period, takes the unromantic view of romantic characters current among the people, and makes the burlesque "Morgante Maggiore." The cruder fun is of medieval origin; the more delicate facets in the story belong to the Renaissance. As for Chaucer's dry humor, that belongs to him and not to his age. His whimsical vein, something like the spirit we see to-day in the work of Mr. Barrie, is rare indeed in the Middle Ages. Too seldom is medieval humor subtle; too often it is of the slap-stick order. This is true even of the greatest achievement of medieval wit, the beast-epic of "Reynard the Fox." It is not without its subtleties, particularly if the

allegory is made elaborate, but the real joy of the piece comes from the tricks of the rascally Reynard, who successfully defies the king and the laws, offends against morality, ridicules the Church and its rites, and yet comes out unscathed in the end. Reynard is the prize rogue of medieval times, but he is more than this, he is a kind of sublimation of bourgeois villainy. The people, smarting under the oppressions of the king and the nobility, took a glorious revenge in the creation of Reynard the Fox.

The greatest single force in Medieval Literature remains to be considered, the Church. For high and low alike, religion was no remote abstraction, to be confined to Sundays; it was a most practical and ever present issue. Its tremendous importance in the life of the whole people can scarcely be sufficiently insisted upon. The Canterbury Pilgrimage, comprising practically every rank of society, illustrates this admirably, although the devotion of some of the company is hardly greater than that of the modern lady who goes to church to display an Easter bonnet. We do not get the true essence of medieval religion from the easy-going Canterbury pilgrims. The terrors of the Last Judgment were frequently in the mind of the medieval man, coloring all his thoughts and acts. God and the Devil were not theological conceptions, they were very near and real beings. In those days any one might, perhaps, be startled at meeting an angel or a fiend in the midst of some everyday occupation, but no one would have considered it strange. The supernaturalism of heathen times was still strong in the minds of the people, although transformed according to Christian beliefs. At every moment in life the powers of good and evil were waiting to aid or to destroy mankind.

We can understand something of this permeation of every human interest by religion when we observe how deeply it affected every type of Medieval Literature. Since the Church, in theory at least, held sway over things temporal

as well as things eternal, she fostered and perpetuated both secular and religious Literature. Far less than in other periods is it possible to distinguish the two. The monk in the scriptorium copied romances as well as the lives of saints; the abbot read his breviary and his Ovid with equal frequency. Occasionally a theological discussion intrudes into a romance. Roland, in one of the later Charlemagne stories, discourses to Vernagu, a black giant forty feet tall, about the doctrine of the Trinity and other points of Christian dogma. The homiletic note was sounded at every turn, no matter what the subject. History, beginning with the Creation, was made to set forth the relations between God and man, and point a series of moral lessons. In the bestiaries the qualities of the lion recalled the virtues of Christ; the whale, decoying mariners to disembark on its back, and then engulfing them, illustrated the treachery of the devil. The lapidaries revealed virtues and vices through the medium of jewels. Disputed questions of various kinds were decided by reference to the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity was important in teaching arithmetic; the Scriptures furnished proof of astronomical hypotheses. Medical science was a curious jumble, full of charms in which the saints had taken the places of heathen divinities. Genuine science was likely to meet the reception accorded to the labors of Roger Bacon or later to the discoveries of Galileo. Truly, the Church left no type of Literature untouched, and touched nothing which it did not color with its own beliefs, and transform for its own purposes.

Within the Church itself, two contrasting tendencies are noticeable. On the one hand, the utmost naïveté in the relation of religion to life, and on the other, the utmost subtlety in theological speculation. Medieval religion was frequently gloomy, as we have seen, and heaven a place to be forfeited by what we should now consider venial sin. Normal and innocent human desires were looked upon as inspirations of the Devil. This led to placing exaggerated value on a virtue, no

matter how manifested, or how far carried to excess. There was no "golden mean" in the Middle Ages. A thing was bad or it was good, and that was an end of it. That evil may consist in the misuse of things capable of good is an ethical proposition foreign to habits of medieval thought. Griselda, resolving to be a patient wife, and sacrificing to this her happiness, her health, her honor, and the lives of her children, or Amis, exalting friendship to such a degree that he murders his little boys to cure his friend Amiloun of leprosy, — these are examples of the sort of conduct the Middle Ages found admirable. Again, no sympathy was extended to those outside the fold of the Church. The converted Saracen princess in the romance of "Ferumbras," in the ardor of her new faith, exhorts the Christian knights to kill her aged father, who still sticks out for his old god "Mahoun." "You ought to have killed him last night, when you captured him," she says. Every consideration of natural feeling and womanly tenderness is made subordinate to this revolting type of Christianity. Such puerile and short-sighted conceptions of ethics and religion are abundantly illustrated in the medieval lives of the saints and apostles, and in the pious tales and *exempla*. While many are offensive to our modern feelings, most of them make a strong appeal through their sincerity and childlike simplicity. The popular element is further noticeable in their love of a good story, and in the tendency to embellish it, as a shrine is hidden beneath the votive offerings of the faithful. Much professedly religious Literature in the Middle Ages, put into shape by ecclesiastics, is almost as truly the product of the people as the ballads.

It is astonishing to contrast with this the keenness and minuteness of philosophical speculation. Philosophy in the Middle Ages meant theology, of course, since all philosophy not in accord with the doctrines of the Church was heresy. Within the Church arose Scholasticism, the effort to make religion a thing of reason as well as of revelation. This was

the noblest intellectual task open to the medieval thinker, to reveal the mind of God in terms of human logic. Never was authority more revered than in this age, yet many of its most brilliant intellects sought to establish by argument the reasonableness of ecclesiastical dogma. But Scholasticism, like alchemy, ended where it began. Bolder spirits, men of unimpeachable devoutness, like Saint Bernard, dared to proclaim dogma incapable of logical analysis, and turned to the sensuous interpretation of religion which we call Mysticism. The speculative tendency within the Church really gave way long before the shattering blows of the Reformation.

Viewing the Literature of the later Middle Ages as a whole, one is particularly struck by its singular variety and richness. Germanic poetry had degenerated in the age preceding into a senile mouthing of meaningless alliterative formulas. It had little true originality; it could not store new wine save in old bottles, and the later vintages were indeed tasteless. When Christianity came, there were no poets to give it fitting expression. Cædmon and Cynewulf, if we may allow these names to stand for their respective schools, produced incongruous work. The poetic stock-in-trade of Germanic heathendom was ill suited to Biblical stories or to the lives of saints and martyrs. The Continental Saxon epic, the "Heliand," written some two centuries before the Conquest, represented no advance in poetry. The rise of scaldic verse in Scandinavia marks the waning of the heroic spirit of the "Edda." While the new learning within the Church was producing much that was valuable, the Literature of Western Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries was constricted indeed as compared with what followed. The new Romantic spirit, however, brought with it an intense interest in a great variety of subjects. Stories were drawn from every quarter of the known world,—from the Celtic peoples, from the classics, from the East. The old poetic technic was discarded; the bard now played a lyre of many strings. The thirst for learning was

insatiable; it was a bishop of the fourteenth century who wrote, "A library of wisdom is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared with it." This abundance of material gives the age an appearance of confusion which goes far toward explaining our ancestors' notion of it as a literary chaos. Classification, even to-day, is a task of the greatest difficulty. The individual author counted for little; it was seldom that he told his name. Possibly the striking absence of the personal element in medieval letters is due to the fact that they were so largely in the hands of men under ecclesiastical rule. The Church discouraged individuality, and emphasized tradition and authority. So it was with Literature. A medieval author was far more willing to attribute the best elements in his work to some well-known writer dead and gone than to claim them himself. The notable exceptions are authors standing outside the Church, — minstrels like Chrétien, for example. And one can forgive the feminine pride of the authoress of the charming Breton *lais* when she says, "I will tell my name that I may be remembered; I am called Marie, and I am of France." Such exceptions prove the rule of anonymity. Classification of this enormous mass of Literature by types is almost equally difficult, since this kaleidoscopic array of poetry and prose is constantly shifting and recombining, the lights from one group coloring another, stray fragments becoming detached and coalescing anew, in a different pattern. Here again the influence of the Church is prominent. Since her business was with all men, she stood as a link between the gentle and the lowly, helped each to perpetuate their songs and stories, and lent to each her aid in the more serious branches of letters. In short, so varied and inconstant is this mass of material that one is sometimes tempted to agree with the Italian critic Croce, who maintained the arrangement of literary productions according to types to be an impossibility.

And so the attempt to trace even the most prominent char-



acteristics of this period in a single hour becomes absurd. A realization of the attitude with which we ought to approach it is perhaps most necessary, and this I have attempted to suggest; that we are to expect in the poetry of the aristocracy a reflection of their new social ideals, of their love of magnificence, of their formality and artificiality; in the poetry of the people a freedom and emotional quality now appearing as tragic pathos and now as pure comedy; in the Church, which cultivated every form of letters, both a reflection of the simplicity of popular literature and a tendency to theological subtlety, and all too often the blighting chill of a dreary didacticism.

In any survey of Medieval Literature we are forced to speak harshly of it now and then. It is often lacking in restraint and proportion. Never was there a greater passion for telling everything and a little more too. Never was there less sense of historical perspective; medieval, classical, and Biblical heroes and heroines ran joyously along side by side. Time and space were forgotten. Medieval literature is like medieval painting, out of perspective and proportion, the men and women as tall as the towers, all sides of the castle visible at once, God in the heavens above, and the yawning jaws of Hell below. Despite all this, there is a wonderful fascination about seeing the world at an angle so different from our own. Such was the universe to the medieval man, and if we put ourselves thoroughly in sympathy with his point of view, we gain something of an experience wholly new, the sensation of living in another age than our own. In closing, then, it is this strange charm, this fascination about the Middle Ages which I would emphasize. Critics are perfectly right in saying that there is too little romance as we commonly conceive it in the period of chivalry, too little of the poet's vision of

"Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

“I walked in an enchanted land,  
Chaucer and Dante took my hand;  
I saw the garden kept by Mirth,  
I heard Crusaders shake the earth;  
Scotus and Bernard guided me  
To pierce beyond mortality;  
I burst the fetters of the years,  
And knew the music of the spheres.  
And faintly yet the visions stay  
To shame the garish world to-day.”



## VIII

### THE RENAISSANCE

BY JEFFERSON B. FLETCHER, PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE  
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"OUT of this thick Gothic night, our eyes are opened to the glorious torch of the sun." So at the dawning of the sixteenth century wrote François Rabelais; so felt the illuminated ones of his generation. To their eyes, dazzled by unaccustomed light, the nearer past seemed darker than it really was; they saw the Middle Ages stretching as a shadow between them and the effulgence of the antique world; men, they thought, were one long "sleep" away from true civilization.

Their fallacy of vision is obvious to us. My predecessor in this course has shown how far from "thick" or nocturnal was that medieval, or "Gothic," atmosphere. I need not retell his tale. Yet while Rabelais exaggerated the chiaroscuro of his contrast, contrast there nevertheless was. To pass in thought from the medieval mood to the Renaissance mood is like passing with the eye from band to band of color in a rainbow; as the eye travels, brightest yellow leads by imperceptible gradation to purest green. Just where yellow leaves off, and green begins, is hard to say; but that the color so changes only the color-blind would deny. So is it with successive stages of civilization. The color of the common life changes, constantly but imperceptibly, from moment to moment. Looking backward, we can see that, so to speak, green has succeeded to yellow; but we can see the epochal colors at all only at long range. To mark off the Renaissance

by precise dates would be about as hopeful an undertaking as to measure the green band of a rainbow with a footrule and an aeroplane. Enough for the moment to say that by Renaissance color is meant the color of European civilization during, broadly speaking, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

As Rabelais implies, the Renaissance felt itself to be, in some sense or other, the rebirth of a spirit that had been dead, or sleeping, since Rome fell before the northern barbarians. For a thousand years the barbarian spirit had prevailed; but now

"Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.

. . . . . Redeunt Saturnia regna."

"The great cycle of the centuries returns upon itself; the Saturnian, the golden antique, age is come again." Such was the faith. What led to it? Why, justly or not, did Rabelais, Christian as he called himself, dub these ten centuries of Christianity a "thick Gothic night," a night of ignorance and barbarism?

To answer these two questions fully is to define the ideals of the Renaissance.

To the first, the answer at long range is in the paradox that the Renaissance faith in the possible revival of antiquity sprang from a denial of the persistent faith of the Middle Ages that antiquity had never died. The German barbarians disrupted the Roman Empire without meaning to disrupt it, or realizing that they had disrupted it. All they wanted was land and booty and glory; the splendor of Roman civilization itself awed and won them; they preserved that civilization by adapting themselves to it, or they thought that they preserved it. They ruled where Rome had ruled, calling themselves Romans, pretending themselves the legitimate successors of the Cæsars, "as if," as Petrarch scornfully exclaimed later, "saying so made it so!" This "legitimist illusion" deceived the whole Middle Ages. Dante urged its divine right, alleg-

ing that "Christ dying confirmed the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire over the whole human race." And in the "Divine Comedy," the Emperor Justinian celebrates the triumphal progress of the Roman Eagle from Æneas to Charlemagne, and prophesies the perpetuity of its glory.

As the Middle Ages held to the unbroken continuance of the Roman Empire, so they held to the Roman Law as their common law, to the Roman language as their common language, believing Latin what Dante sought to make his "noble vernacular" — "illustrious, cardinal, courtly, and curial."

This medieval legitimist illusion was possible, however, only in the shadow of ignorance of what had been the real Roman State. The conquest of the real Roman Empire by Teutonic barbarians had meant the interpenetration of two peoples, of two forms of family and society. The resulting social web was woven, warp and woof, of these two diverse threads, and it changes in color as one or the other thread here or there thickens; but in the shadow of historical ignorance the party-coloring of the social pattern was invisible; past and present, Roman and German, blended into one monochromatic blur. When a warrant of legitimacy was wanting and wanted, it was forged, like the documentary "Donation of Constantine"; where a record of antiquity showed contrary to current prejudice or opinion, a corrective subintention was read into it. So might Ovid's "Art of Love" be construed as an allegory of love divine, and be dedicated to the Virgin Mary. So came the antique formulas of life to be "gothicized"; antique law, at least in Italy, to be feudalized; antique literature to be moralized; antique language to be barbarized.

The Renaissance was, in the first instance, a realization that this medieval faith in the perpetuance of the Roman Empire was an illusion; in the second instance, an aspiration to make the illusion a reality, to revive the Roman State, though preferably the Roman Republican State, as it had been, unpolluted by barbarian commixture. The realization,

the aspiration, was Italian. However much German emperors might boast themselves legitimate successors of the Cæsars, Italians felt themselves the sole blood-heirs of the Romans; the Imperial City was their birthright. One day yet, as their poet sang: —

“Prowess against savagery  
 Shall take up arms; and the battle be quick-spèd;  
 For the ancient bravery  
 In our Italian hearts is not yet dead.”

Even while Dante, in his idealist illusion was hailing Henry the Luxemburger as “the most clement Henry, Divine, Augustus, and Cæsar,” his fellow-Florentines at home were urging Robert of Sicily to make no terms with that upstart “German King.” For them that “German King” was but a make-believe Cæsar, an up-country ass in the imperial lion’s skin. Vainly might Dante reproach them, for that they “*first and alone . . . have raged against the glory of the Roman prince, the monarch of the earth and the ambassador of God . . . and, deserting the legitimate government, seek like new Babylonians to found new kingdoms, in order that the Florentine may be one polity and the Roman another.*”

Dante was mistaken. The Florentines were not standing out in order that the Florentine might be one polity and the Roman another; it was the German polity from which they argued secession. They wrote to their Brescian allies: “The Latins must always hold the Germans in enmity, seeing that they are opposed in act and deed, in manners and soul; not only is it impossible to serve, but even to hold any intercourse with that race.” This is the sentiment that inspired the Latinistic revival in Italy. Four decades after this letter was written, Petrarch in 1351 exhorts not merely to secession, but to a reconquest of the Empire by Latins. This bolder dream of what may be called Pan-Latinism was revealed in a letter to the “Roman People,” who are urged to intervene in the

trial of the luckless Rienzi. "Invincible people," wrote Petrarch, "to whom I belong, Conquerors of the Nations! . . . The supreme crime with which [your former Tribune] is charged . . . is that he dared affirm that the Roman Empire is still at Rome, and in possession of the Roman people. . . . If the Roman Empire is not at Rome, pray where is it? If it is anywhere else than at Rome it is no longer the Empire of the Romans, but belongs to those with whom an erratic fate has left it. . . . But believe me, if a drop of the old blood still flows in your veins, you may yet enjoy no little majesty and no trifling authority. . . . You have but to speak as one; let the world realize that the Roman people has but a single voice, and no one will reject or scorn their words; every one will respect or fear them."

Illusion for illusion; no legitimist pretension of German Cæsar could be more fantastic than this naïve taking of the mongrel and helpless populace of medieval Rome for the *Populus Romanus*, the "invincible" Roman people; as well call a nettle a rose for growing where a rose once grew. Such self-deception as Rienzi's and Petrarch's could not last; yet the enthusiasm of Petrarch was contagious; and the Italians were infection-ripe. If not materially, at least spiritually, they might, so they dreamed, reënter into the heritage of their forefathers, might be again an "invincible people," the Roman people reborn. "We have lost Rome," wrote Lorenzo Valla two generations after Petrarch, "we have lost our dominion, we have lost our possessions, through fault not of ourselves indeed, but of the times; yet by a more splendid supremacy we rule even now the greater part of the earth. Ours is Italy, ours France, ours Spain, Germany, . . . and many other nations. For there the Roman empire is, wherever the Roman language prevails."

The so-called "revival of learning" in Italy was not for the mere sake of learning. Browning's "Grammarian,"

"Soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst"



of knowledge, is false to the type Browning meant to depict. For no Faustus-like curiosity the Italian grammarians of the fifteenth century grew lean over "*hoti*" and the "enclitic *de*." They sought with passionate eagerness from old books no mere knowledge of old books, but recovery of an old life, poring over the records of antiquity as a man whose thread of memory has been snapped might seek from old letters and diaries to tie together his present and past selves. When the antiquary Ciriaco of Ancona was asked why he spent his substance and risked his life in far journeyings to gather musty manuscripts and broken bits of carved stone, he is said to have replied, "I go to awake the dead."

"There the Roman Empire is, wherever the Roman language prevails." These proud words were addressed by a grammarian to fellow-grammarians, *quirites* of the new Rome, indeed "not the seat of empire, but the mother of letters." "Shall ye suffer, O Quirites, your city to be captured by the Gauls, Latinity to be corrupted by barbarism?" Valla's appeal was heard. These patriot-grammarians declared themselves, and were accepted as truly the *quirites* of the city of culture, custodians, like the Brahmin priesthood, of a sacred speech, key to the past and, as they confidently believed, to the future. For Dante, only a Pope might say,

"Heaven I can unlock and lock again,  
As thou dost know; for mine are the two keys."

But the grammarian Filelfo coolly claims the key to a rival immortality; "I am one of those who celebrating with eloquence illustrious deeds render immortal those who, by nature, are mortal." Well might the future Pope Pius II write to an English bishop: "Great is Eloquence; nothing so much rules the world." Eloquence, especially Ciceronian and Vergilian eloquence, became the common aspiration of articulate Europe; Valla's dream of a Pan-Latinistic empire of the spirit

was well-nigh realized: "the Word was with *Rome*, and the Word was God." In the middle of the sixteenth century Latin Eloquence received one more interesting apotheosis, and illustration, from an Englishman, Gabriel Harvey, Spenser's friend. His pride is not merely patriotic, but almost religious. "Behold," he exclaims (though not in plain, or rather base, English), "Behold (not unexpectedly) Her whom ye so much desire, for the sake of seeing whom ye so eagerly flock together, upon whom in hope and mind you have fixed most constant eyes so long — of incredible majesty, in royal attire, of almost angelic aspect, my most illustrious Hera, my most august Heroine, ELOQUENCE, a divine creature. . . . See, by the immortal God, how beautiful she is ! . . . I pass over her golden hair, and her curled locks; I pass over her serene and most lovely brow; I pass over her shining eyes and dark-colored eyelids; I pass . . ." well, he passes over several other things to "cry out, like the lover in the comic poet: O lovely face! henceforth I blot out all other women from my mind; I am weary of these everyday forms."

So "weary of these everyday forms," Boccaccio had declared that "composition in the vulgar tongue cannot make the man-of-letters"; and he came to blush for his "*Decameron*" not because its moral tone, but because its vernacular, was base. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Dante himself, was relegated by a Florentine man-of-letters to the company of "butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers," "for by his choice of language he seems to have wished to be the intimate of such folk." With the gradual withdrawal of the nations into their own boundaries, however, national pride began to assert the national against the imperial, the Latin eloquence. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries echoes of Dante's plea for the "noble vernacular" made themselves heard in every country. But the "noble vernaculars" must still disdain "everyday forms" of speech, must receive their *accolades* of ennoblement from the classic "*grammars*,"

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and so become classic vernaculars. The contention was the opposite of Wordsworth's; literary language was to be a special mintage of classically trained artists, and no mere matter of common currency; was to be, as Dante said, a "secondary speech," not acquired "without any rule, by imitating our nurses," but by conscious eclectic art. "The vernacular," says Dante, "followeth use and the Latin Art." When Edmund Spenser, as Ben Jonson declared, "in affecting the ancients, writ no language," he was but following the Renaissance tradition, begun with Dante, of so compounding "the illustrious, cardinal, courtly, and curial language" in England, the Platonic Idea of English, in which all customary English participates, and to which, as it were, all customary English aspires. By such indirection, Valla's oracle, "there the Roman Empire is, wherever the Roman language prevails," came true; in all the nations throughout the Renaissance, this ideal of the Roman language as an "artefact" prevailed, and was followed by literary reformers of the national tongues. The first great literary achievement of the Renaissance was the refining of language, the literary medium, according to the canons of the classics, and as a fine art. Thus it happened that an Italian patriotic revival passed into general esthetic reform.

For their profession of "humane letters" (*literæ humaniores*) the Italian grammarians, at least by the beginning of the sixteenth century, were called *umanisti* or Humanists. Whether originally or not, Humanism, the profession of the "humanities," came to be considered as dividing with theology, or "divinity," the field of knowledge. Thus in 1483 Caxton speaks of one who "floured in double science . . . that is to saye, dyuynyte and humanyte"; and in 1596 Sir John Harington declares of a certain person, "I might repute him as a good Humanist, but I should ever doubt him as a good Devine." In the latent conflict between Humanism and Divinity, between the worldly and the other-worldly concerns

of men, lies, I think, the answer to the second of my original questions: Why did Christian Rabelais stigmatize the ten Christian centuries before him as "a thick Gothic night"?

In Græco-Roman Literature the Humanists, reading with a new open-mindedness, found a valuation of human life strangely at variance with that of medieval Christianity. Between the angelic announcement of "On earth peace, good will towards men" and highest pagan thought might indeed be no essential disparity. Vergil's Messianic Eclogue made a strikingly similar announcement, and actually was supposed to have unwittingly intended the Christ, Vergil being, as Dante makes the converted Statius declare,

"like one who goes by night,  
Carrying the light behind him, self-unversed,  
But making all who follow after wise."

Socrates, again, as well as Jesus, had affirmed love to be the sun of wisdom and the source of good. But whatever of ascetic morality and of transcendental mysticism may have been implicit in the teaching of Jesus himself, these moods of negation had become later dominant in Christian doctrine. Early persecution, and afterwards the continuing miseries of barbarian conquest, had made this world seem to civilized Europeans a place of horror. To ignore it, to yearn to escape from it into the promised peace, were counsels perhaps less of perfection than of desperation. The vengeance of God was invoked upon the persecutor, being the only vengeance possible. The thought of Hell was a comfort to outraged impotence; sight of God's enemies, and their own, tortured everlastingly was not the least of the anticipated joys of paradise. But the mischief returned upon the heads of those who had devised it; like a child, scared by its own make-believe, Christendom quailed before the monstrous horror of its own imagining; its age-long anxiety was to avoid falling into the spectral pit it had, in fancy, dug for its enemies. And its

moralists were quick to use this terror for edifying ends; they taught that the fear of Hell is the beginning of wisdom; they particularized infernal punishments with unction. This world becomes a trap to catch the unwary; while there is life, there is danger. Parallel-wise, and almost from its beginnings, Christianity, further to aggravate a morbid distrust of life, had absorbed mystic and ascetic doctrines originating in Oriental minds. "Man is a spirit dragging around a corpse," Plotinus of Alexandria had said in Rome two centuries after Saint Paul had taught there; Christian Europe went on repeating the saying, and like sayings, and Christian fanatics did their best to make such sayings come true. Burdened with the body as so very literally a *dead* weight, no wonder the consistent medieval soul preferred the contemplative to the active life.

"Imitation of Christ" thus meant renunciation of the interests of this world. "Truly," exclaims Thomas à Kempis, "truly it is misery even to live upon the earth." "Thou art deceived," he declares, "thou art deceived if thou seek any other thing than to suffer tribulations." No natural impulse is other than evil; therefore his conclusion that "the more nature is depressed and subdued, so much the more is grace infused." Now the burghers of the free Communes of Italy, hard-headed, practical business men,

"Men of the world who know the world like men,"

might, so long as they remained merely business men, listen to such doctrine with indifferent docility; even talk it themselves — business men are conservative — on Sundays. But as the infection of pagan ideas spread, as these burghers listened to Humanists, or became Humanists, they found aligned against such ascetic renouncements and mystic prostrations not only the standards of life they really lived by, but backing up these standards of theirs all the sanity of Rome, all the graciousness of Greece. These democratic Italians had learned to ignore,

when they chose, constituted authority; they were too far away from the Emperor, too close to the Pope, to stand in awe of either; and both Powers were in the Communes' debt. In Italy thought and speech were free this side heresy, and the borders of heresy were not over-vigilantly patrolled. When in 1433 Lorenzo Valla, in his dialogue "On Pleasure, or the Highest Good," transparently preferred pagan joy-of-life before medieval Christian distrust-of-life, there was no official censure. Valla's argument has paradoxes worthy of Bernard Shaw, audacities manifestly *pour épater le bourgeois*; but his central idea is serious and significant. Men naturally seek, he argues, not "tribulations," but pleasure; and whatever is really and truly natural, is right: "what Nature has created and shaped cannot be other than right and praiseworthy." On this sentence hang the law and the prophets of the Renaissance, indeed of Modernism. The Utopians, those most typically Renaissance folk, reaffirm it; "they define virtue thus," Sir Thomas More tells us, "that it is a living according to Nature," and "they imagine that Nature prompts all people on to seek after pleasure as the end of all they do." "Physis (that is to say, Nature)," writes Rabelais, "at her first burthen begat beauty and harmony, being of herself very fruitful. Antiphysis (who ever was the counterpart of Nature), immediately, out of a malicious spite against her for beautiful and honorable productions, in opposition, begot Amodunt and Dissonance," who, as Rabelais amusingly describes them, went counter to normal humanity, to Nature's offspring, in every respect. "Their heads were round like a foot-ball, and not gently flapped on both sides, like the common shape of men. Their ears stood pricked up, like those of asses; their eyes as hard as those of crabs, and without brows, stared out of their heads, fixed on bones like those of our heels; their feet were round like tennis balls; their arms and hands turned backwards towards the shoulders; and they walked on their heads, continually turning round like a ball, topsy-turvy, heels

over head." True type of the children of Nature, begot in "beauty and harmony," is Pantagruel himself, the "all-thirsty," as Rabelais says his name implies, born when "the world was a-dry." It is natural and right to be all-thirsty for life, to be "good Pantagruelists, that is to say, to live in peace, joy, health, and be always of good cheer."

This doctrine of good cheer was by no means merely a return to paganism. Pagan thought doubtless helped to inspire it; some who preached it were at heart virtually pagan; but in Rabelais, and in the greater men of the sixteenth century, it meant simply a cheerful, manlier Christianity. To this reformed Christianity Death is no longer the scarecrow monster of the "Danse macabre." To Ronsard Death appears as the benignant surgeon of the soul: —

"I salute thee, glad and profitable Death!"

Francis of Assisi indeed had also said: —

"Praised be thou, Lord, for our sister corporal death!"

But Saint Francis speaks for himself; Ronsard for an age of hope. To the dreary refrain of the late Middle Ages, "Fear of death perturbeth me," Ben Jonson sturdily retorts: —

"He that fears death or mourns it in the just,  
Shows of the Resurrection little trust."

Shakspeare, no more than Dante, doubts that "man is made eternal": —

"So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then."

But Shakspeare's interest is all with the actual humanity, not with the potential divinity, of mankind; his ideal, the Renaissance ideal, is the realization by man of full manhood. His highest tribute to a human being was to affirm perfect humanity, to say that

"His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

To deny Nature, to strain above her, to seek, a second Adam, to be as God, — such had been the aspiration of eremite and monk and mystic; such to the Renaissance seemed a presumption not of rising above, but of falling below, Nature; and an Italian poet of the Renaissance so declares: —

"I am a man, and pride myself  
On being human. . . . And if perchance that name  
You hold in scorn, take care  
Lest, making you unhuman,  
You grow not more a monster than a god."

This is not paganism, not a worship of false gods, not a denial of God, but the conviction that man's present business is to live his life as roundly, bravely, beautifully, as he can, leaving the rest to God; that such

"Virtue's a faint green sickness of brave souls,"

as womanishly shrinks from life; that true virtue should in effect be derived not only from *vir*, man, but also from *vis*, vim. "Virile vim" is in fact not far from what Renaissance Italians meant by *virtù*, and the meaning, if not the word, was translated into action throughout Europe.

And this regained sense of harmony between man and his world of action, between virtue and natural impulse, between goodness and happiness, was, I think, what most of all moved Rabelais to hail the dawning of a new sunshiny day for mankind. The gist of his message is in Pippa's song: —

"The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn . . .  
God's in His heaven —  
All's right with the world!"



And the darkness of the "thick Gothic night" lay for him in its wailing: —

"God's in His heaven,"

far, far away; therefore

"All's *wrong* with the world!"

No doubt Rabelais' jubilation — as Pippa's — was premature. To his greeting of the dawn one is tempted to retort Shakspeare's pensive antiphony: —

"Full many a glorious morning have I seen . . .

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride

With ugly rack on his celestial face."

For his "Abbey of Theleme" Rabelais could make the rule which was no rule, "Do as you please," because those only admitted there, "free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honor." The Thelemite idea was good; but the Thelemite membership must have been small. In Renaissance Italy, however, many were virtual members of the Order, self-elected and credentials waived. There the career was open, wide open, to all the talents, and all the appetites. God had said to Adam, according to Pico della Mirandola, "I have made thee free to shape thyself at thine own sweet will (*quasi arbitrarius*). Thou mayst sink thyself into a beast; thou mayst uplift thyself godlike, at thy choice." Italians were exercising this choice, thoroughly. Following the maxim "Do as you please," they made themselves thorough saints and thorough devils, even thorough trimmers and moral weathercocks joyously gyrating with every shift of mood. The hero of the moment was the *virtuoso*, the man thorough in whatever he undertakes; and the resulting society of *virtuosi* might be compared to medieval society as a fantastic "*capriccio*" to a "plainsong." Whether in thought or

action, the average medieval man must play his part in the general orchestra; to change the tune was treason; to get off the key heresy. Now the solo was the thing. Society was indeed by no means, as acid Protestant reformers and some rhetorical historians would have us believe, wholly "off color"; it was indeed many-colored, high-colored. When Roger Ascham later sourly called Renaissance Italy "Circe's Court," he should at least have remembered that also the "wise Ulysses" found "Circe's Court" homelike. Still, the medieval caution, "Remember, man, that dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," was very generally made premiss to the conclusion, therefore *carpe diem*, Enjoy thyself now; and the syllogism was rhymed by the representative Lorenzo the Magnificent:—

"Youth, how beautiful it shows,  
Yet how little while will tarry!  
Let who would be, now be merry;  
Of To-morrow no one knows."

It was but filial for Lorenzo's son to exclaim at his election, "Now let us enjoy the papacy which God has given us." Leo X and his generation did enjoy it, to the scandal of the rest of Europe. Contemn the pleasures of sense! had cried Valla, why, "the shame is, not that we have five senses, but that we have not fifty." Certainly, in default of the desirable fifty, the generation of Leo worked with tenfold energy the actual five, reflecting its life in an Art and Literature like itself, now sensuous and elegant, now sensuous and brutal, but whether elegant or brutal, idealistic or realistic, decorative or didactic, always and in all sensuous. Its fullest self-expression is in pictures; its finest poetry is picture-poetry. Northern Europe surrendered herself to the sensuous charm of Italian art, accepted the new Italian Literature as a model on almost a parity with Græco-Roman Literature, yet at the same time reprehended the free and sensuous living which

only could produce such Art and Literature. A century nearly after Leo, Ben Jonson was to say of his own time: —

“Humor [*individual caprice*] is now the test we try things in;  
All power is just; nought that delights is sin.”

Luther — not first indeed, but first effectively — so accused Leo and his Italy. Savonarola, Erasmus, orthodox Catholics all over Europe, had protested against Humanism turned cynic as well as against asceticism turned hypocrite; but these had been reformers on the inside; Luther was revolutionary, openly invading the one “forbidden land” of the faith, which even the audacious Valla, “wont to spare no one,” had dared to approach only under the disguise of a faithful subject. Rabelais had said to his Thelemites, “Do as you please”; Luther in his tract “On the Liberty of a Christian Man” said to all his readers also, “Do as you please.” Rabelais had presupposed the restraint of “honor,” Luther presupposed the restraint of Scripture; but the religious restraint proved as easy of evasion or waiver as the moral. And from liberty, turned license, Luther, like Sir Thomas More, shrank back. Individual reason, Luther came to say, without knowledge of the divine grace, is a “light that is only darkness,” “a poisonous beast with many dragons’ heads,” “an ugly devil’s bride,” “the all-cruellest and most fatal enemy of God.” Reaction spread; for Protestantism Calvin, for Catholicism the Council of Trent, reasserted against the liberty of the private conscience the authority, with power, of dogma.

In literature, conflict between liberty tending to license and authority tending to dogma manifested itself parallel-wise. Successively, in Italy, France, England, Spain, in the generations represented by Ariosto, Ronsard, Spenser, Lope de Vega, literature was in a state of unstable equilibrium, weighted more or less equally with romantically free, and with classically restrained, forms and moods. Creative genius was acceptedly a breath from the gods, blowing whither it listeth,

provided it be willing — *noblesse oblige* — to blow through only tubes and stops of classical manufacture. Typically romantic would seem the mood of Ariosto's humoresque fantasia of

"The ladies and cavaliers, the arms and loves,  
Courtesies, and daring deeds that were, what time  
The Moors from Africa came oversea."

Yet Ariosto carefully followed by anticipation the injunction of Du Bellay "to soak himself in the classics, to devour them, and having well digested them, to convert them into his own flesh and blood." For relative observance of classic epic structure, for purism of diction and harmony of style, for studied clarity and moderation, Ariosto has been called the founder of the classic tradition in Italian poetry. Ronsard and his "Pléiade" strove with might and main after the classic models; but it is their natural Romantic lyricism that has lasted, that has led to their rehabilitation from the slurs of the Classicist Malherbe by the attorney of Romanticism, Sainte-Beuve. If Du Bellay formulated the classic canon in his elaborate "Defence and Ennoblement of the French Language," in a single line of his "Regrets" he epitomized the Romantic confession,

"I write naïvely all that touches me at heart."

Spenser, accepted by his own age as the English Vergil, was disdained by the English "Augustan" age as a fantastic "Goth," and hailed by the generation of Keats as "the bright Lyrist" "blasphemed" by the "rocking-horse" school of Boileau. Lope de Vega, writing plays in defiance of all classic rule, protests that in deference to the childlike public, he sins against his own lights.

But throughout Europe the gradual inclination in Church and State, in Art and Literature, was towards centralized authority. By the mid-sixteenth century Italian critics had already formulated the Classicist canon by which seven-

teenth-century French Literature was to be governed, and to govern. Harmoniously conforming private reason with established authority in Church and State and society, imitation of "nature" with imitation of the classics, the poetry of Racine and the criticism of Boileau realized, as never had been realized since Augustus ruled, the Roman ideals of sanity, clarity, temperance, subordination. Speaking thus in the spirit, if not in the letter, a Roman language, such poetry and criticism might be said to verify Valla's prophecy, "The Roman Empire is there, because there the Roman language prevails."

But if this French classic Literature fulfils the Roman mood of the Renaissance, it negates what in a rather special sense I may call the Greek mood of the Renaissance. I mean the mood of individual self-assertion, of restlessness, inquisitiveness, of the "all-thirstiness" of Pantagruel. As the jealous self-assertion of the individual Greek states at once developed their distinct personalities and at the same time left them, like the loose twigs of the traditional faggot, to be easily broken by the concentrated strength of Macedonia and of Rome, so the jealously self-assertive Italian states were broken by the solid force of France and of Spain. Dream as Italians might of a new Roman Empire, or at least of a new Italian Nation, in their waking, working hours they refused the one sacrifice needful, the sacrifice of individual and local self-interest. After all, their blood was mixed; their mixed Germanic and Roman institutions were but outer manifestations of mixed inheritance. When Humanist patriots inveighed against alien rule ("this barbarian dominion smells to heaven!" cried Machiavelli), when the Florentines argued that "the Latins must always hold the Germans in enmity, seeing that they are opposed in act and deed, in manners and soul," all forgot that these liberty-loving barbarians, these individualistic Germans, asserted empire not only over Italian borders, but as well within Italian breasts. The Machiavelli

who exhorts his imagined Prince, Dante's *Veltro redivivus*, to unite Italy though the heavens fall — and liberty, morality, humanity, fall with them — this Machiavelli as Florentine Secretary has no other thought than for the selfish aggrandizement of Florence. For him as Italian patriot, Cæsar Borgia is the great pacificator; for him as Florentine citizen Cæsar Borgia is a "basilisk" and an enemy of mankind. For Machiavelli's Italy, the solid "grandeur that was Rome," grounded on unity and subordination, was obviously not again to be; but seeking, even in imagination, this Roman solidarity, studying Roman wisdom, yet restless, inquisitive, "proving all things," freely expanding and sensuously expressing her multiple personality in the knowledge of good and evil, Renaissance Italy did in some measure achieve again "the glory that was Greece," and like Greece, in the field of the spirit her conquerors.

If the French Racine most nearly realized the Roman ideal of Italian Humanists, it is no mere paradox to declare the Greek mood of the Renaissance at its richest in the English Shakspeare. His writings hold the mirror up to his nature, and reveal it supremely "restless, inquisitive, 'proving all things,' freely expanding and sensuously expressing a multiple personality in the knowledge of good and evil." Because he, as Ben Jonson said, "knew little Latin, and less Greek," Shakspeare thus reincarnates the Greek spirit; more of a scholar, he had been more a slave to the letter and the rule, like the "learned Grecians" of his time. As it was, his Humanism derived vastly less from the authority of "humane letters," *ex literis humanioribus*, than from the appeal of human concerns, *ex moribus humanis*. And such, if I may so say, was the "Humanism" of the Greeks themselves.

Shakspeare's genius is not merely unperplexed between liberty and authority in art, it is also hardly divided in interest between earth and heaven. Sufficient unto the earth are the interests thereof. "Shakspeare," Carlyle noted in his Jour-

nal, "seems to have had no religion but his poetry." Maybe, and maybe not; but in any case his thought, his poetry, is turned to secular ends. All manner of human men and women he draws, and some monsters, but never an embryo saint or theological doctor. In this complete Humanism, this whole-souled absorption in humanity, Shakspeare gives the pure color, marks the precise center of that band in the historical spectrum of European civilization which we call the Renaissance; as his contemporary Edmund Spenser, on the other hand, illustrates the pervasive tendency away from Humanism, gospel of humanity, towards a new "divinity," a new asceticism. Spenser's own mood is one of compromise. In his youth he wrote two "Hymnes in Honour of Love and Beautie," perfervid with praise of "Beauties glorious beame" and of Love, "Lord of truth and loialtie." Nothing could be chaster than these Platonizing pæans, yet their author came to feel them pernicious, "finding," he says, "that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which being too vehemently caried with that kind of affection, do rather sucke out poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight"; wherefore, unable to call them in, he resolved "to reforme them, making, in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiall." If the watchword of the progressive Renaissance was Valla's affirmation of the trustworthiness of Nature, here in Spenser's distrust of Nature, in his resolve to "reforme . . . earthly or naturall" moods into "heavenly and celestiall" moods, is in principle the negation of the Renaissance. As for Dante, Vergil and Reason yield to Beatrice and Dogma; so for Spenser, Plato gives place to Calvin. Spenser may well call his two reformed Hymnes "two honorable sisters," for they have indeed taken the veil; Cytherea has passed her Calvinistic novitiate, and now as Sister Sapience retires to her cell, "the closet of her chastest bower." Nor in

“ . . . those, whom shee  
Vouchsafeth to her presence to receave,  
. . . thenceforth doth any fleshly sense,  
Or idle thought of earthly things, remaine” ;

but through her they are led to

“ . . . looke at last up to that Sovereigne Light, —  
Even the love of God ; which loathing brings  
Of this vile world and these gay-seeming things.”

The “*Faerie Queene*” is, under its garment of sensuous imagery, but a long sermon on the same world-renouncing text. Rabelais’ sun of nature is setting on the eve of the Puritan Sabbath, which, in effect, Spenser’s last line acclaims,

“ O that great Sabbaoth God graunt me that Sabaoths sight ! ”





## IX

### THE CLASSICAL RULE

BY JOHN ERSKINE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

THE eighteenth century is the period of the Classical Rule. Between the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Romantic movement accompanying the French Revolution, the literatures of Europe were under the almost despotic influence of the classics. It may seem an error to speak of the "end of the Renaissance" and the "beginning of the Romantic movement," as though the Renaissance in some of its ideals were not still vital with us, and as though the Romantic movement had not been felt in man's earliest imaginings. It may seem an error also to imply that the Classical influence was at its absolute height in all the European literatures at the same time, whereas such an influence is a wave, surging out of Italy into France, from France into England and Germany, and recoiling in a spent form from England back into Italy. But even tentative dates are convenient. For English Literature, if Milton be considered the last writer of the Renaissance, his death in 1674 may be taken as the starting-point of the Classical period; and the end of the period may be found just before the revolutionary writings of Blake and Burns. And this arbitrary century, 1675-1775, which in English Literature includes the mature power of the Classical period rather than its origin or its decay, may serve as well for the approximate boundaries of the period in the continental literatures.

A far greater need for definition is in this word "Classical."

With its companion term, Romantic, it bids fair to supply criticism with one of its perpetual quarrels. Who ever did define Romantic so as to satisfy all his hearers? It is with deep pleasure, therefore, that I consign that horn of the dilemma to the next lecturer. Classical is an easier term to deal with. It is vague largely because, like other literary terms, it serves many meanings, and has a trick of suggesting several of them at once. It originally meant simply, the best of a kind or class. Those Roman citizens were *classici* who were at the head of their *classus*. When the word, still in Roman times, was first applied to writers and their works, "Classical" meant the best of the particular kind. In the same sense we still speak of a new book as a classic; and it should be noted, in this use is implied no opposition to "Romantic." In our common American speech to-day perhaps this oldest meaning of the word is the one we usually intend; with us a classic is a masterpiece, a finished work, secure of its fame.

But for the European mind the classics have been pre-eminently the literatures of Greece and Rome, and the term applied to individuals has meant those Greek or Latin authors who excel and set the standard in their kind of writing. The very fact that they were considered models for later writers would have implied sooner or later a body of formulas or rules deduced from their practice. But the enormous vitality of the Aristotelian tradition in criticism happened to supply such formulas as a chief part of the classical heritage, so that the Renaissance scholar conceived of a classic as a masterpiece of ancient Literature, produced in conformity with recognized laws. Herein the opposition is plain to the lawlessness of Romantic art.

In the content of the Greek and Latin masterpieces the medieval world, emerging into the Renaissance, found to its joy clarity of spirit and sanity of mind. The world as the ancients saw it was comparatively simple and whole, and their technically perfect and transparent expression was in accord

with an inward balance and order. That the ancient writers were not always sane; that they now seem to us at times romantic in technic and in mood, more modern in certain aspects than some of our contemporaries, need not disturb us here. At least to the early Renaissance they furnished ideals of sanity, clearness, and order, which still are strongly implied in the word "Classical."

Out of this meaning of the word comes a final meaning, which we are somewhat prone to use as a reproach. That Literature which is perfect in order, sanity, and restraint is likely to seem to highly emotional natures mechanical and cold. The Romantic movement in England, at least, managed to throw back some such opprobrium upon the writers of Queen Anne's time, and it may be doubted if many young students of English Literature think of the eighteenth century much more happily than as a slough of despond through which the national genius wallowed and waded, and emerged at the wicket gate of the "Lyrical Ballads." And too proverbial, unfortunately, is the difficulty an Anglo-Saxon of our time has in discovering any charm in the Classical writing of France.

A classic, then, as we must use the word, is a Greek or Latin author whose work is standard in its kind, and therefore gives the law to later writers in that kind. His view of life is large and sane, his emotion is held in balance by reason, and his technic is perfect. And perhaps we should remember too that Classical Literature, so defined, suggests composition under happy auspices, in a golden age, under a Mæcenas or Louis XIV or Queen Anne, in a period when Literature is least reformatory or evangelical, and most contemplative, most in accord with its age. Such a period craves national leisure and peace and much learning. It comes only after years of more rapturous but less coherent endeavor, for it needs a large background of material to work upon. It is a time when the race sets its house in order and realizes its imaginative wealth. It is therefore thoroughly conscious and calculating,

not given to ecstasies, and to that extent it is a period which seems to suppress the race's imagination. But it is always a climax, and marks a desirable accomplishment of culture. We may borrow Sainte-Beuve's image and say of a literature, as he said of the individual, that there comes a season, after its journeys and experiences are accomplished, when its liveliest joy is to ponder and fathom what it has learnt, and feel again its old emotions, as one might love to visit and revisit old friends. That is the spirit of a Classical period.

Although 1675 may be taken for the first arbitrary date, the influence of the classics upon European Literature begins, of course, in the earliest movement of the Renaissance, when the new-found treasures of Greece started the imagination of Italy, and then of the whole cultured world. When we read of the devotion and the sacrifice with which the Italian collectors brought together the priceless libraries which became the well-heads of inspiration for modern Literature, we may well suspect that those old manuscripts, so perishable, so extremely difficult to find, had for the popes and princes and their emissaries a romantic appeal, the lure that takes hold of collectors. But from the beginning it was the substance of the classics that was praised. The sanity of the world they described, the wisdom and the justice of their speculations upon life, fitted them to be at once the basis not only for literary study, but for all education. In the Renaissance to read and write Latin and Greek was the first discipline of the mind.

The honor in which the old languages were held, and the masterpieces they contained, produced at once a conflict not to be decided until the Romantic revival, perhaps not decided then. The Middle Ages were of course rich in literary expression, and the coming of Classical ideals found each nation with a mass of poetry on its hands, and in most cases an incipient drama, to which Greek and Roman standards of

taste could not apply. Since this national, idiomatic Literature did not conform to the Classical law, the scholars were for discarding it. Give up, says Du Bellay, all such foolishness as rondeaux, ballades, virelais, and chants royaux, which serve only to prove our ignorance; give your attention to the epigrams of Martial, and the elegies of Ovid, and imitate the odes of Horace. And as for comedies and tragedies, you would know where to look for their models, if only kings and commonwealths would restore them to their ancient dignity, now usurped by farces and moralities. A few years later Sidney had his famous condemnation to make of that English drama which is the chief glory of the Elizabethan age, finding fault with it because it was not in accord with the models of Seneca and Plautus. Here the conflict between the national folk-literature and the scholarly, Classical ideal is sharply defined. It makes little difference that Sidney happens to be in sympathy with some highly unclassical section of English poetry, as where, confessing his own barbarousness, he says he never heard the old song of "Percy and Douglas" but he found his heart moved more than with a trumpet. The point is that he allows himself this praise of the Romantic ballad only because there is no Classical precept to forbid him; and he bolsters up his self-accusing taste by reminding us that the incomparable Lacedemonians carried ever that kind of music with them into the field. So Addison explained the beauty of the same ballad, by showing that it resembled the classics. "If this song had been written in the Gothic Manner, which is the Delight of all our little Wits, whether Writers or Readers, it would not have hit the Taste of so many Ages, or have pleased the Readers of all Ranks and Conditions. I shall only beg Pardon for such a profusion of *Latin* Quotations; which I should not have made use of, but that I feared my own Judgment would have looked too singular on such a Subject, had I not supported it by the Practice and Authority of Virgil." And earlier in the same paper he wrote, "The

Thought is altogether the same with what we meet in several Passages of the 'Æneid'; not that I would infer from thence, that the Poet (whoever he was) proposed to himself any Imitation of those Passages, but that he was directed to them in general, by the same kind of Poetical Genius, and by the same Copyings after Nature." In attempting to justify their love of a great poem not derived from Greek or Latin, Sidney and Addison were larger minded than the stricter Classicists; they were seeking instinctively that modern definition of a classic which Sainte-Beuve proclaimed, a definition generous enough to include all masterpieces of every school and time.

But for a century or two the conflict was to be waged between the national genius of each country and the common Classical ideal. We are accustomed to think that the Romantic, native Literature was destined to supremacy from the first, simply because it has been in the ascendant for the last hundred years. But it was equally natural for the eighteenth century to believe in the Classical ideal, and for the same reason. The Classical qualities appealed to the world then, and seemed as firmly planted as Romance seems now. If Sidney was mistaken in condemning the Elizabethan drama for its unreasonable extravagances, at least it was more than two hundred years before scholars thought he was wrong; and the drama to-day is nearer to his ideal than to Shakespeare's.

Besides this conflict between the national folk-literatures and the superimposed Classical ideal, the acceptance of Latin and Greek models induced another conflict. To a large degree the Renaissance mind, inheriting the medieval delight in formulas, was disposed to imitate the Classics by imitating their outward form. Only the more fortunate grasped the truth that the inner spirit of Classicism could be poured into the native molds of French or English Literature. Du Bellay, as we have seen, would discard the Provençal verse

forms for the Classical odes, and Gabriel Harvey would have the young Spenser and Philip Sidney write their rhymeless verses in a prosody painfully close to Latin rules; and later Campion was to make his admirable plea for the Classical, quantitative verse, regardless of his own fame in rhyme. Out of this absolute temper, prone to dogmatic formula, evolved the rigid tradition of the eighteenth century in France and England. In France the Pléiade, that group of poets around Ronsard, had sought to improve their Literature and their language by Classical imitation; although they did less violence than Harvey or Campion to the genius of their native tongue, they bound it by rules as strict, formulating the uses of the alexandrine, of rhyme and assonance, of the hiatus, of strophe-form. If they did not practise the artificial hexameters and quantitative stanzas that greet us to our astonishment in Sidney's "Arcadia," they at least gave to their Literature the Classical tradition of formula and law, and by their own great lyric gifts made the formulas seem vital. But in protest to this tradition other critics emphasized the substance rather than the form of Classicism, and so unconsciously preserved in their respective countries that native strain which was to have its day in Romanticism. After a writer has mastered all the rules of the Pléiade, says Regnier, he is still not necessarily a poet.

"All he knows  
Is to write prose in rime, and rime his prose."

And the vigorous Elizabethan speech stirred itself to do justice to Harvey's "Ram's horne rules of direction," that "rable of scholastical precepts which be tedious."

These, then, are the two literary problems which Classicism held out to the Renaissance world, and which continued to divide the practice of English Literature till the Revolution, and which has divided the practice of French Literature still later. Should or should not the Classical standards super-



sede the indigenous forms of art ? And should the imitation of the Classics be through external rules or through the spirit ?

The rule of the Classicists was strongest in France. A nation that has an effective Academy, for the regulation of its language and literature; a nation that loves reason and order and excels in the formal things of art, would naturally welcome a literary tradition based upon authority. The French genius, as we think of it now, is nearest to the intellectual clarity of the Greek, and the Classical tradition, as it touched the Literature of each country, called out in response from that Literature those qualities most in accord with it. Because the French genius had a tendency toward the formal things of art, — technic and structure, whatever can be developed by precept and practice, — French Classicism emphasized those elements, somewhat to the exclusion of other traits. It is important to remind ourselves that had there been no Classical tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, France would still have set store by some of the characteristics we find in Racine or Voltaire. But in the ancient tradition the French spirit found itself ennobled and reënforced, so that France became the natural stronghold of Classicism.

What aspects of the Classical tradition France was destined to make prominent, were sufficiently indicated by the founding of the Academy in 1635. Its forty members were resolved to strive for the purity of the French tongue, and to make it fit for the highest eloquence, a purpose that was induced by patriotic motives. But in the further plan of the Academy to compose an authoritative Dictionary, Rhetoric, and system of poetics, we see at once the implication so easy for the Latin mind and so difficult for the Anglo-Saxon, that imaginative Literature can be fostered to any great extent by a system of rules. The Academy was also to pass judgment upon the writings of its members, for the further promulgation of its literary principles. Without any direct dependence upon the

ancients, then, it was evident that through this institution France would put its Literature in order and fashion recipes for the continued production of the kind of art it liked.

Two years after the founding of the Academy, Descartes published his "*Discours de la Méthode*," written not in Latin but in French, through the same impulse of patriotism as interested the Academy in the native tongue. How great the influence of Descartes is upon Boileau, Corneille, Racine, and the other less typical writers of the period can hardly be determined here; but he must be mentioned as illustrating, along with the purely literary men, the worship of reason in French thought of that time, and his attempt to explain the universe according to mechanical laws is of a kind with the literary attempt to reduce the creations of the imagination to laws as absolute.

Criticism has pointed out one important influence of Descartes upon Corneille, or at least a parallel between them. In Descartes' system of ethics the chief emphasis is upon the will. Passion, in his philosophy, should be directed to good actions by the will, and the will should be restrained and taught by reason. In Corneille's tragedies, such as "*Horace*" and "*Polyeucte*," the dramatic struggle is between passion and the will, guided by reason. For the exploitation of such a subject the form of the Classical tragedy would have been a convenient model, even if critical opinion had not forced Corneille to adopt it; whatever else this kind of theme demanded, it demanded a presentation that should be intense, logical, and complete; every step in the struggle between the will and passion should be represented, not as an episode, but as a term in a scientific demonstration. The so-called Classical unities of time, place, and action were acceptable to Corneille because they helped to develop his philosophical themes with the precision he desired.

It was not Corneille, however, but Racine who gave French tragedy once for all its Classical form. In his case it is easy

to trace the influence of the ancient literatures. He was an accomplished Greek scholar, saturated with the spirit of that lofty drama which he tried to realize once more on his native stage, and to some extent he was a philosopher; the broad idealizations which fill out so austere a form as Classical tragedy were native in his cast of thought. But he teaches us how impossible it is for a man or a nation to think in terms of the past; much as he thought himself Greek, he was essentially French. His very limitations make appreciation of him a test of one's appreciation of the French genius. In the reasonableness of his dramatic theory far more than Corneille he is the child of his age. Where Corneille held that the extraordinary subject, improbable but heroic, was the true material for tragedy, Racine insisted that its true material was ordinary, commonplace life. Where Corneille's drama was complex or subtle, Racine's was simple to the point of bareness. Commonplace character in the most usual crises of life was his subject, and most of his plots were love stories, because love, he considered, is the commonest test of character.

In other traits besides his reasonableness Racine may well be considered the most typical of the Classical writers in France. More absolutely than Corneille, he adopted without protest those rigid precepts for the drama which the criticism of his time thought it derived from the ancients, the unities, for example; and since he was a poet of great genius, he obeyed with consummate ease those laws of versification with which the *Pléiade* had bound the alexandrine. In his obedience to rigid laws, and in the ease with which he moves within narrow limits, he is the supreme monument of French taste. But he illustrates also only too well the sacrifices by which Classicism arrived at this sort of perfection. He could treat only such subjects as suited the form he practised, and such subjects were few. He looked at life not with curiosity to see what it was, but to find such characters and situations as could be included in his formula.

Therefore whatever was ignoble or crude or subtle or modern was rejected, if he ever perceived it, for what was in his sense tragic. That Racine might, under other influences, have been a great comedy-writer, is proved by his delightful "*Les Plaideurs*"; but even in that play he follows the ancients, borrowing from Aristophanes.

It is usual to say that Racine's characters are types rather than characters. This criticism of one who took the Greek dramatists for his masters is not surprising; for in its elemental simplicity the ancient tragedy, like the ancient sculpture, presented life in types rather than in individuals. Indeed, the theater of Racine's time had this advantage, that the acted part, no matter how faintly individual the character seems on the page, must have fixed itself in the personality of the actor; whereas in the Greek theater the scale of the performance must have prevented much individual interpretation. But there is this profound difference between the Greek type and the persons in Racine's plays. The Greek character is made a type by a process of idealization; Prometheus or Antigone is the quintessence of the Greek ideal of unselfish patience or filial devotion. Because they are based in life, and reach their concentrated form through no influence of esthetic rules, but through the instinctive workings of the human imagination, they stand for more than they incarnate, they seem native to other ages and other lands than ancient Greece. But the Classicist formula forbade Racine to deal with life broadly; his characters are not idealizations so much as they are definitions. They suggest nothing more than they say; they are Classically "finished," in the sense that they rouse no emotion they do not satisfy; and they have meant very little, as expressions of life, to other nations than the French. The Greek type is life made clear by wonder and love; the Racine type is life set in order by rule.

If the verdict seems to be against Racine, let us remember

that the portion of human experience which is thoroughly manageable in prescribed art-forms is very small indeed. Only the experience that has been lived over till it is commonplace can be counted on, with any surety, to let itself be demonstrated, and come out even. In this central core of much-lived wisdom types are easy to find, but they are not likely to be very fresh or very suggestive. If character is suggestive, it is so by virtue of the mystery of life which does not come out even. Therefore we must not blame Racine if his heroes and heroines seem to many minds somewhat lacking in significance. For those who find truth most readily, as the French genius does, in the formal grasp of things, who would rather see life clearly than see it whole, Racine's art remains justly the most consummate expression of Classicism.

With Racine one naturally associates his friend Boileau, satirist and critic after the example of Horace. Satire and burlesque flourish in a Classical age, because they appeal to the intellect, to the wit, in the limited sense, and also because an age which reduces itself to formulas, which conventionalizes itself, is easily satirized. In this century belongs the précieux movement, which sought to govern by legislation the emotion and the conduct of lovers, and which reduced the course of true love to geographical accuracy in the *carte du tendre*. That this particular movement was susceptible of satire Molière showed us in his immortal "Précieuses Ridicules," but life in other aspects was sufficiently conventionalized to deserve the same treatment. It is natural perhaps to think of the period of Classicism as expressing itself in stately, formal way. It is worth while to remind ourselves that in French Literature as well as in English and Italian the Classic attitude of mind in its most intellectual manifestations led naturally into satire and burlesque, whether the writers were Scarron or Boileau or Dryden or Pope.

But the name of Boileau is associated not with satire, although he made his reputation first in that kind of writing, but with formal criticism. His famous imitation of Horace's "*Ars Poetica*" is the creed of the age, stated with the clarity and definiteness of its best manner, and with its characteristic limitations also. It is the recipe that a scientist might formulate for Literature, using no other guide than common sense and good taste. Indeed, the treatise is an exposition of good sense rather than of imagination: —

"Whate'er you write of pleasant or sublime,  
Always let sense accompany your rime.  
Falsely they seem each other to oppose, —  
Rime must be made with reason's laws to close;  
And when to conquer her you bend your force,  
The mind will triumph in the noble course;  
To reason's yoke she quickly will incline,  
Which far from hurting, renders her divine;  
But if neglected, will as easily stray,  
And master reason, which she should obey.  
Love reason then, and let whate'er you write  
Borrow from her its beauty, force, and light."

After stating this principle, Boileau illustrates it by a description of the various kinds of writing, and the decorum required in the style of each. There is little in the principle of common sense that a Romanticist might object to; Wordsworth himself might use the general statement in support of his theory of natural diction. But Boileau, like other Classicists, does not necessarily mean "natural" when he says "reasonable"; reason, to his way of thinking, is a matter of convention, so much so that he represents to the less formal Teutonic mind the depth to which unimaginative prose in verse may fall. But to the French lover of restrained form and decorum in art, he is for criticism what Racine is for tragedy, the absolute model.

There is hardly space in this lecture to more than name the other appearances of the Classical tradition in seventeenth-century France, the numerous would-be Vergilian epics, such as the "Moïse Sauvé" of Saint-Amand and the "Alaric" of Georges de Scudéry, a school of artificial writing sufficiently known to fame through the ridicule of Boileau, and indirectly through Scarron's burlesque of Vergil. Nor is there time to speak of the rich vein of worldly wisdom which always runs through Classical periods, and which gave France La Rochefoucauld's "Maximes," and which Gallicized Æsop in La Fontaine. Nor can we discuss the quarrel among poets and critics as to whether the ancient writers, the original Classics, were or were not better than their imitators, a surprisingly widespread discussion exemplified in Charles Perrault's "Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes." But some mention must be made of the man who in the eighteenth century became one of the dictators, not only of French Literature, but of European thought, and who sums up in his character and achievements practically all that has been said of Classicism in France.

In Voltaire and his work the chief traits of Classicism found expression, the technical skill, the obedience to literary law and form, the predominance of intellectual over emotional interests, and the wealth of worldly wisdom. If his character seems hard and unlovely, his wit cruel as well as keen, his reputation as a Classicist has not suffered; for the English reader, at least, is usually prepared to accept intellectual hardness as a natural accompaniment of Classicism. And if his sojourn with Frederick the Great serves to make both himself and the Prussian ruler in some lights ridiculous, it should be remembered that through him, more than through any other writer, Classical France spoke to Europe.

The importance of so many-sided a man cannot be recorded adequately here. But we should note that he repre-

sents, what is usually forgotten in literary histories, the liberating power of Classicism. He was trained in the strict school; he could write facile verse according to the approved rules; in "Zaïre" and "Mérope" he showed himself a master tragedian in the difficult tradition of Racine; intellectually, he was without a glimpse of the illusion of Romanticism. But history remembers him as a champion of liberty, a friend of the oppressed, a spokesman for the new causes that were to bring on the Revolution. It is customary to speak of Romanticism as fostered largely by revolutionary ideas; and many chronicles of Literature seem to imply that the human spirit, perceiving itself about to be smothered in Rationalism, by a violent effort broke loose from Classicism to breathe the free Romantic air. It is easier in English Literature than in French to show that this view is incorrect. But even in French Literature Voltaire illustrates the valuable accomplishment of Classicism. Out of the infinite rules of artifice comes a style disciplined into a natural simplicity; out of the constant and rigid exercise of the intellect comes that curiosity and skepticism that means freedom; and out of the worship of common sense comes a trust in the human race that means democracy. It is well enough, if we choose, to despise the stiff formulas through which Classicism hoped to manufacture true Classics. But the training was wholesome; so much so that without it Romanticism, it may be, would have been but an inarticulate sentiment. The mind that had learned to think and speak with absolute clearness had fully as much to do with the Revolution as the soul that had learned to feel vaguely.

It is by the heroic couplet that the casual reader recognizes Classicism in England, and if versification be the test, then Dryden was right in thinking that the age began with Edmund Waller. But the real beginning came from France



with the Restoration, when the French models of good taste and wit encouraged the reaction England for some time had felt against the extravagances of Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature. If Wordsworth protested later against the unnaturalness of Pope's diction, that diction itself had once evolved from a protest against other diction quite as stilted. The Elizabethan vocabulary, characteristically voluble rather than precise, had been warped out of all common sense by the fantastic writers, from Donne to Cowley, those little poets whose aim in diction was to hit upon something that had never been said before. To be absolutely original in your language just after a period as rich as the Elizabethan, meant that you must be odd beyond all imagining. Even Robert Herrick, the almost faultless craftsman, was touched by the disease, and in his two-line or four-line experiments frequently uses language which the world had not heard before, nor has cared to hear since. Therefore when Dryden and his school restored the epithet of common sense to poetic diction, speaking of the organ as the "vocal organ," or of the command of Heaven as the "dread command," they were delighting their readers with a novel truth to nature, trite as their simple epithets later became.

In other things than diction Dryden is the important figure at least for the beginning of the Classical period. In the seventeenth century both verse and prose had developed into various schools, all of them interesting but none of them great. Milton may be disregarded, as his place for many reasons is with the great Elizabethans. But the lesser men — cavaliers, fantasists, puritans, diarists, satirists — carried the Literature into divergent and often decadent paths, where it bade fair to waste itself utterly. In Dryden's large nature most of those strands were gathered up. He gave English Literature once more unity and force; and the secret of his power was in that genius for law and order which results in Classicism.

Dryden's indebtedness to French criticism was great. In Corneille and Racine he recognized a logical faculty not to be found in Shakspeare; in the decorum of French narrative he thought he saw an immense improvement over Chaucer. We are sometimes prone to credit Dryden with an unclassical genius, if we happen to dislike Classicism, and if we do like his reworkings of Shakspeare and Chaucer. It would be fairer to the age, of which in England he is the greatest and earliest figure, to admit that his genius was largely intellectual, and that its power came largely through discipline. The man who wanted to tag Milton's verse had nothing of the Elizabethan about him. That he should be first of all a satirist is, as we have seen, a natural effect of the period. That he was a satirist of generous proportions was probably due to the importance of the things he satirized. When he stooped to make fun of Shadwell, he displayed no more of the Elizabethan largeness often attributed to him than did the author of "Hudibras" in that highly partizan burlesque. But in "Absalom and Achitophel" the political crisis and the personages portrayed were of sufficient moment to render his genius noble.

The Classical tradition was, of course, nearer akin to the Latin races than to the Anglo-Saxon. To the French, as we have seen, Classicism meant simply new emphasis upon traits they already possessed. To English Literature Classicism meant an importation of foreign ideas, a new fertilization of the national genius. Beginning with Dryden, we can still detect the foreign flavor of the eighteenth century, first the French flavor, and then the Latin. To say this is not to imply that the foreign influence was in any way unfortunate. English Literature has never been great except as it has been inspired from abroad, in Alfred's time, in Chaucer's, in the sixteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The French influence gives charm to Dryden's prose in the note of social grace, ease, lightness, and courtesy.

What admirer of Milton's prose, noble as it is, would credit it with social grace? If Voltaire could write history in the manner of well-bred gossip, Dryden could write literary criticism with a sense of social contact, having in mind an audience of artists, to whose taste and keen repartee his ideas must be submitted. Before such an audience an author does not appear in slovenly undress. Dryden's thought has the clarity and the finish of the Classical tradition largely because he presents himself, French fashion, as a man of the world conversing with his peers, and not, like Milton, as a champion against all comers, prepared for mortal combat. Milton's attitude is the English one; for that reason Dryden's French decorum has for the English mind a special permanent charm, as of something Romantically strange.

The Latin charm of Dryden is found in Pope and Addison, also in all the eighteenth-century masters. No language, not even Greek, has quite the haunting power of Latin. In Dryden we find for the first time those echoes of Vergil and Horace and Lucretius and Martial and Juvenal, which for many an English gentleman have called up memories of his own academic youth, and of the youth of the world. A truth expressed in Vergil's lines seems always more perfect and more profound than in any other later speech, such fragrance has the classic poet acquired from the age-long veneration and habitual quotation of the civilized world. It is as a man of the world, as a cultured gentleman rather than as a professional scholar, that Dryden echoes the Latin poets, and from this fact comes their magic in his work.

Such a delight in the Classics is almost a Romantic pleasure, there is so much elusiveness, so much suggestion in it. Some such suggestion there was for the eighteenth century in those Latin epithets in Pope's verse, which to Wordsworth and his school seemed empty of poetic content. It would be profitable to examine as a whole the Classical quotations which head the "Spectator" papers; they form a precious an-

thology of Latin quotations, chosen by the best-trained minds and the richest spirits of their time, and so they represent in a unique way the haunting power of Latin verse in the spirit of cultured England. Or we can find that same power beautifully reproduced in Thackeray's "Henry Esmond," in the Horatian allusions and quotations. Or for a very modern instance, proving the vitality of this classical strain, we can find it in Stephen Phillips' fine lines to Gladstone: —

"Thou didst love old branches and a book,  
And Roman verses on an English lawn."

To speak of the Latin echoes in Dryden and the other English poets is to speak of something quite apart from their translations. From the beginning of the Elizabethan period England had been taking possession of all other literatures through translation, and naturally the Classicists turned especially to the ancients. By what steps the Classical tradition became naturalized, so that it was a thing of spirit rather than an external influence, may be traced through the changing fashions of translation. At first the translators hoped to reproduce the sense of the original; later they were content to reproduce its spirit; in some cases they were indebted to the original only for the initial idea, and the resulting work, whether from Boileau's pen or Pope's, was for all purposes original. Dryden was considered among the legitimate translators, though by our standards he is very free with the text; Dr. Johnson thought him, for truth to both letter and spirit, a prince of translators. But the fact that both he and Pope won so much fame by their translations in an age when many of their readers must have been as familiar as they were with the originals, would lead us to think that even in their translations the cultured reader found that foreign flavor of Classic allusion which I have spoken of as the power of the Latin Muses over the English mind.

Dryden was the first of the eighteenth-century wits. He recognized the turn of words or ideas, of all intellectual "conceits," as an important part of a writer's equipment; his masterly use of the heroic couplet, that natural weapon of English wit, exhibited the manifold capacity of rimed verse, and made this form the Classical standard. His practice of the Cowley ode, that loose, meandering stanza supposed to be Pindar's measure, gave what was hitherto only a fad, a place of true dignity among English lyric forms. After him the free stanza was the natural mold of the English ode, serving first, though incorrectly, as the standard of ancient, really Classical song, and afterwards as the acceptable medium of the Romantic lyrists. In the drama and indeed in all departments of Literature, Dryden had a strong leaning toward the principles of French criticism, with its unities of one kind and another, and its restraining laws. But he was English at heart, and in his critical writing there is great reluctance to commit himself altogether to a tradition of formalism and definiteness.

But if Dryden did not give himself up absolutely to Classicism, there were some lesser men who did. Thomas Rymer, for example, whose criticism is made important by his method, then new, of illustrating his principles by quotation, is often strangely effective when he uses his common sense, and strangely foolish when he allows himself to be guided blindly by the practice of the ancients. His discussion of "Othello" illustrates the incongruity of strict Classicism on English soil. "This Fable," he says, "is drawn from a novel composed in Italian by Gherardi Cinthio, who also was a writer of tragedies; and to that use employed such of his Tales as he judged proper for the Stage. But with this of the Moor he meddl'd no farther.

"Shakespear alters it from the Original in several particulars, but always, unfortunately, for the worse. He bestows a name on his Moore, and styles him the Moor of Venice, a

Note of pre-eminence which neither History nor Heraldry can allow him. Cinthio, who knew him best, and whose Creature he was, calls him simply a Moor. We say the Piper of Strasburgh, the Jew of Florence, and, if you please, the Pindar of Wakefield; — all upon record, and memorable in their places. But we see no such cause for the Moor's preferment to that dignity." Rymer also objects to the killing of Desdemona, who did not deserve death, and to the important part the handkerchief plays: "The meanest woman in the play takes this Handkerchief for a trifle below her Husband to trouble his head about it. Yet we find it entered into our poets head to make a Tragedy of this Trifle." As a more proper ending for the play, Rymer suggests that Desdemona should have dropped the handkerchief some place where it might turn up again naturally just as Othello is about to smother her. "Then might the Fairey Napkin have started up to disarm his fury and stop his ungracious mouth. Then might she (in a Traunce for fear) have lain as dead. Then might he, believing her dead, touched with remorse, have honestly cut his own throat, by the good leave and with the applause of all the Spectators; Who might thereupon have gone home with a quiet mind, admiring the beauty of Providence, fairly and truly represented on the Theatre."

If Rymer shows us the worst that Classicism can do in judging a literature that does not answer to its notions of decorum, we can find happier illustrations of its best in Addison and Gray, true heirs of the Classical tradition, yet wise readers of all literatures. Addison's papers on "Paradise Lost" are the foundation of Milton's modern fame. Although he approves of the epic largely because it conforms to the ancient models, Addison approaches it also in that spirit of free common sense in which Sidney had allowed himself to like "Chevy Chase." Addison finds in Milton truth to life quite as often as he finds truth to the bookish traditions;

and when we praise him for this breadth of sympathy we should remember that he is no early Romanticist, but a Classicist, and he illustrates the triumph, not of intuition, but of disciplined good taste. So the still more scholarly Gray discovered the charm of early English, the Gothic charm, if you please; in him too Classicism and Romanticism are Truth, which is one thing. The lure of romance, and all that appeal of the Classics which has been described here, is in his perfect Latin poem, "*O lacrimarum fons*," which the eighteenth century admired, and Byron loved.

The world that Addison and Steele show us in the "*Spectator*" should perhaps be compared with the world Pope portrays, if we are to see what that most polite society was like. If Pope is nasty, Addison very obviously is a kindly idealist, and neither picture is the whole truth. And both writers are essentially prose men; both build their art upon conversation, though Pope is a master of glittering versification, and Addison is the artist of simple speech. They portray a Classical, therefore a highly conventionalized, society; and they are therefore both satirists. Pope depends more obviously upon foreign models. He suggests the Latin Satirists, not only by the conventional subjects and the familiar forms, but by the scurrility of his tongue. Seventeenth-century England, even the ministerial part of it, was conscientious to a fault in rendering Latin frankness, and Pope held to the tradition, with incongruous occasional soarings into polite speech. In the "*Rape of the Lock*" he is nearer to the French models of burlesque. No poem is more characteristic of a Classical age, which craves leisure and learning, and implies a great background of Literature. It is hardly too much to say that no one can appreciate the "*Rape of the Lock*" who is not, in the technical sense of both words, a scholar and a gentleman. In every line is some quaint or brilliant suggestion of old Literature, some sly thrust at conventional manner, or some incomparable

turn of the social phrase; the story that on the surface is the burlesque, is but a small part of the poem's message. Only a learned age or a polite society could produce or enjoy this monument of worldly wisdom and wit.

The mention of eighteenth-century satire brings Swift to mind, but one hesitates to rank him, or Goldsmith either, with the children of Classicism. Swift's enormous force is indeed intellectual, but for obvious reasons his work lacks sanity and discipline, the foremost traits of Classicism. In Goldsmith too there is small sense of a literary tradition, nothing to compare with the literary tradition in Dryden or Pope; and even the worldly wisdom which gives his masterpiece is not Classical but Irish, a wisdom which, being Irish, is quite undisciplined.

The man who sums up English Classicism most broadly, as Voltaire sums up French Classicism, is Dr. Johnson. He is English to the core, but he is trained in the school of common sense, and order, and literary precept, and absolute standards based on the Classics. He is England's nearest approach to a national academy. In his own person he laid down the law for language, literature, and manners; he wrote the official dictionary and the official biography of his age; and by his immense personal force he held the public taste to the path he believed English letters should take. Romanticism had no charms for him; he ridiculed Bishop Percy's new-found ballads with terrible effectiveness. On the other hand he despised the French, and when in Paris, he talked Latin so as not to give the Frenchmen an advantage over him every time he opened his mouth. The true Classics were his teachers, the sages of Rome and Greece. Yet in Johnson too we feel that Classicism for the English nature was an artificial mood. In him, as in Dryden, we feel the lure of the ancient tongues, here in a majestic prose that suggests Rome. But its charm was vagrant, and has kept no abiding place in English speech.



Classicism ought to have been at home, if anywhere, in Italy; but for various reasons it meant almost as little to Vergil's country as it did to Germany. Political tyranny had chained the Italian inspiration, until its only activity was in imitation. Something like the French institution was formed in 1692, in the Arcadian Academy, whose members, for the more natural composition of poetry, masked themselves as Arcadian shepherds. Their purpose was to keep alive the best poetic tradition by their own insatiable writing. Other academies, less famous, existed in various cities at an earlier date, and before some of them the youthful Milton, as he tells us, read his verses and won applause.

A few Italian writers found their inspiration in England. Baretti, friend of Johnson and Reynolds, imitated the "Spectator," as did Gaspere Gozzi, brother of the dramatist; and Parini wrote his "Giorno," borrowing from Thomson and Pope. In the drama it was natural, perhaps, that the Classic tragedy, reinforced by the example of Corneille and Racine, should give the model. Maffei's "Merope," admired by Matthew Arnold, but otherwise little known to English readers, preceded Voltaire's play on the same theme. And in Alfieri the Classic tragedy became vitalized, not so much by the spirit of Classicism as by a passion for freedom, a patriotic idealism that suggests the new Romantic age.

In Germany Classicism was a late development, and it fared ill. The close of the Thirty Years' War saw the exhausted country overrun with foreign influences, chiefly French; and it might have seemed as if the traditions of Louis XIV would have spread easily into a country that had just then little literary impulse of its own. But the love of the fatherland rendered neutral all foreign influence. The so-called language societies, not unlike the French or Italian academies, were organized to drive foreign terms from the German tongue. Opitz pleaded for the restoration of Ger-

man as a literary instrument, and reformed its versification, unfortunately introducing the French alexandrine. A few generations later Bodmer, the translator of "Paradise Lost," was pleading the cause of English Literature, while Gottsched was discountenancing Shakspere and admiring Corneille and Racine, because in them nature was disciplined by reason. But whether they admired English or French models of taste, the German poets had little recourse to the true Classics, Latin and Greek; and their Literature, in spite of their Classical scholarship, was to become great, like the modern Italian, through patriotism. With Klopstock's hexameters and Voss' translation of Homer Classicism might seem to give evidence of itself; but Klopstock's popularity was founded on his lyric genius as much as on his Miltonic epic, and the hexameter in German is as truly an exotic as it is in English. Indeed, when Lessing finally disposed of two of the three famous unities, showing that only unity of action is necessary in the drama, Classicism in Germany was practically dead. The Classical influence in Goethe, for example, came rather from contact with antique art, and from his Italian journey, than from the body of literary tradition we have been considering. The national spirit was growing in Germany, a Gothic spirit, and French Classicism never gave more than a veneer to the rugged German imagination.

Perhaps this brief glance over several literatures has shown us what was the influence of Classicism in the eighteenth century. It was an age of reason, schooled in very definite tenets, which were based, or supposed to be based, on the practice of the Roman and Greek writers. It was an age of severe literary discipline; it gave its attention to the externals of technic more than to the mystery of life; and on its worst side it ran to dead formula and meaningless phrase. Against this outworn paraphernalia of expression the Romantics

rebelled; but we have seen that it is a mistake to think of Romanticism as altogether a reaction from the Classic spirit. The discipline of the eighteenth century gave England the poetry of Wordsworth and Tennyson and Arnold, by as natural an evolution as that by which it gave France her modern masters. If it is the spirit, the soul of life, for which we now seek to discover laws, it was formerly for the expression of life that Classicism formulated its principles; but we cannot say which point of view is older, or which is right. In time we shall be Classicists, setting reason above emotion; and afterwards we shall rediscover Romanticism, whatever Romanticism may be. Already, perhaps, there is a perceptible turning back to the world's great books for standards and models; much of the criticism, for example, of Mr. Howells or Mr. James appears to set up rigid and narrow measurements for the novel, in the very spirit of Classicism, and in the same spirit scholars seek to define the short-story. Perhaps our children's children will hearken to a new Wordsworth, who will bid them take for their teachers, not books, but "the silence that is in the starry sky." Doubtless they will think the message new. But for the comfort of Classicists we may reply that this is no newer than the message of a poet-herdsman, bred like Wordsworth among the hills, two thousand years ago: "Seek him who maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning."

## X

### THE ROMANTIC EMANCIPATION

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YOU may remember that my predecessor in this course of lectures left me impaled upon the longer and sharper horn of a very serious dilemma — the definition of Classicism and Romanticism. He defined Classicism clearly and finally, and left to me what he admitted to be the harder task of defining Romanticism. It would be simple enough to answer that the Romantic is in every respect the opposite of the Classic; but such a definition would not be altogether true, even so far as it goes, and it certainly would not go one tenth so far as it ought. It would hardly be fair to wriggle off the dilemma-horn in such fashion; but I think I am justified in pulling myself from it by grasping at another statement which does seem to me altogether true; namely, that if the Classic, as he has so well described it, is the clear, the orderly, the definite, then the Romantic is the vague, the unconfined, the indefinite and indefinable, "the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration, and the poet's dream." Therefore I am not only under no obligation to define it, but if I did, I should by that very act be denying and destroying it. I may, however, attempt, not to define, but to describe the Romantic, as opposed to the Classic, by some or, better, by many of its prominent characteristics (for it has many). Perhaps the error of most critics who have attempted thus far to define or describe

Romanticism has been that of fixing upon some one, or some two or three, of these characteristics, as the essential definition or adequate description of the whole movement.

Certain it is that many of the definitions thus far given are unsatisfactory and inadequate. Brunetière, with his systematizing method, makes the expression and even exaggeration of the *ego* — *le moi* — to be the whole of Romanticism. Professor Beers and others, following Heine, make medievalism its central motive, though it must be noted that Professor Beers admits the inadequacy of this. Those who descend directly from Rousseau, or who love most of all the nature poets, make the "return to nature" — itself a vague phrase with many meanings — to be the essence of Romanticism. Those who feel most deeply the philosophical and ethical significance of the movement will agree with Brandes when he says that the preference of progress to attainment, of the search for truth to the possession of it, of the quest to the goal, is the foundation of Romantic poetry. Those to whom artistry and the esthetic impression mean most will follow Walter Pater in making a certain "strangeness added to beauty," by contrast with the classic "order in beauty," its essential characteristic. This, by the way, and I think the point has never been noted, should remind us directly of the definition of Romanticism originally given by Novalis himself, as "that which brings us a sensation of agreeable surprise" ("Was in angenehmer Weise uns befremdet"). Mr. Watts-Dunton, in his masterly article introducing the third volume of Chambers' "New Encyclopedia of English Literature," has in his very title given the briefest and perhaps the most nearly adequate definition of Romanticism, in the phrase "The Renaissance of Wonder." A proper emphasis should be given to the first as well as to the second of the two chief words in this phrase. The Romantic movement is in fact another Renaissance, as full of freshness and newness of life, as intense in its vigor and its energy, as that of the sixteenth cen-

tury ; and even more than that of the sixteenth century it is not only a rebirth but a new birth, the beginning of what will in future ages be called modern life. If I were to repeat what I have spoken of as the error of previous students in attempting to make one characteristic of this movement the essential or the most prominent one, I should choose an aspect which I think has not even been mentioned before; namely, that it is the beginning of *democracy in Literature*, of the expression in Literature of the life of every man and of all the people ; that it at last transformed the ancient Aristocracy of Letters, which had been made even more aristocratic than ever by the Renaissance and by the Classical Rule, into a true Republic of Letters ; and prepared the way for the democratic, the all-inclusively realistic, and even the social, literature of the future.

Looked at from the height of the centuries, what did the change from feudalism to nationalism and royalism, made in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, amount to, as compared with the change from aristocracy and royalism to democracy made by the French Revolution? What broadening of life to include more of humanity was effected by the Humanists? What abolition or even curtailment of special privilege? And since life and Literature necessarily go together, if the historian of two or three centuries from now, having attained his perspective, will look back to the French Revolution and allied movements as the beginning of modern life, will not the literary historian of that future century likewise necessarily look back to the Romantic movement as the beginning of Modern Literature? This is the first of many points which I must only suggest, briefly and dogmatically.

To come back now to the purely literary question, and even to the somewhat technical and academic question of what Romanticism is, I shall describe it, first, technically and academically, as distinguished from Classicism ; and second,

historically, as a movement which swept over the whole western world during the last half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, almost completely dominating English and French Literature from about 1800 to about 1848, entering as a chief element into the greatest, and even the so-called Classical, period of German Literature, giving Italian Literature its Leopardi, Manzoni, and others, and American Literature its Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, Poe, and, considered as the literature of democracy, its Whitman.

The technical distinction between Classicism and Romanticism is one of the eternal contrasts of Literature, both in theory and in fact, exactly as is the contrast between idealism and realism. The first of these distinctions is as universally applicable as the other ; it can be used in judging, describing, and characterizing any race, nation, epoch, or individual, in the history of Literature, just as well as in describing the beginnings of the nineteenth century and the contrast of that period with the preceding one. If the distinction between Romanticism and Classicism is not as commonly used and as popularly understood as that between realism and idealism, this may be due in large part to the varied meanings which have been given to the words Classic and Romantic. Variations in meaning of the word Classic have been pointed out in the preceding lecture. Not to go back over the origins of the word and its most popular use in modern times and even to-day, as designating the best in the literatures of Greece and Rome, we must note that its secondary use, as designating the best in any literature, is not only popular, but has been clearly sanctioned by the authoritative critics of England, France, and Germany ; by Matthew Arnold, when he defines Classic as "that which belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word classic, classical)," and, on the whole, by Sainte-Beuve in his essay entitled "*Qu'est-ce qu'un classique ?*" where he describes it in the words so often quoted, and so curiously mistranslated

by Walter Pater, as that which is "énergique, frais, et dispos"; that is, work which has the fullness, freshness, and vigor of life that make it worthy and able to live, down through the centuries; and by Goethe, before Sainte-Beuve, in almost the same terms and I think with exactly the same conception. Both these meanings of the word Classic must be dismissed as completely as possible from the mind in order to appreciate its technical and universally applicable meaning, as contrasted with Romantic. Failure so to clear the mind of convention has given rise to some amusing blunders and still more amusing paradoxes in the history of literary criticism. There is, for instance, Stendhal's famous and often-quoted definition of Classic taste as liking that which our grandfathers liked, and of Romantic taste as liking that which we really like ourselves. Deschanel has written several volumes on "Le Romantisme des classiques," his very title being based on this confusion in the use of the word Classic as, on the one hand, that which is now accepted as good in Literature, and, on the other hand, that which has certain definite characteristics as opposed to the Romantic; and of the Romantic as primarily that which revolts against the accepted Classic standards, as well as having certain definite characteristics of its own. He shows very cleverly that the writers now accepted as classics (in the popular sense) were almost always rebels and even leaders of revolt in their own time, and by the very originality of their achievements imposed themselves upon the admiration of future times; as was the case with Corneille, Molière, Pascal, and even Racine, in the seventeenth century, or Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo in the nineteenth. That is to say, those whom we call Classics to-day are merely Romanticists who have arrived, *des romantiques arrivés*. On the contrary, the works which in their own day were considered classics, conforming to all the accepted rules and conventions, possessing that "order in beauty" which Pater speaks of, and lacking just that "strangeness added to beauty" which any new



revelation of beauty, whether Classic or Romantic in type, must have — these works, being classics for their own day, are not so for posterity. Plentiful examples may be found, such as the dramas of Voltaire, the novels of Mlle. de Scudéry, the lyric poetry of Jean-Baptiste (not Jean-Jacques) Rousseau, and the host of minor poets in any epoch who follow the fashions of the day. For lack of being Romantic enough in their own time, they have failed to become classics for future ages. It is a pretty paradox, useful chiefly for showing the need of a clearer and more technical understanding of the words used.

This, then, is the real contrast : the Classic appeals to the reason ; it seeks proportion, harmony, completeness, perfection of form, clearness, universality, the typical and the eternal,—in short, beauty finished and absolute. The Romantic appeals to the imagination : it seeks effectiveness rather than completeness, emotion or sensation rather than thought, color and richness rather than form, suggestion rather than clear and full expression, melody rather than harmony, the individual rather than the typical, the accidental rather than the universal, the concrete rather than the general, the transitory rather than the eternal, the fragmentary rather than the finished,—in short, beauty relative and transient, with the charm, suggestiveness, and poignancy of its very incompleteness.

The Classic temper seeks for calm, the Romantic for excitement. The Classicist may have passions as intense as the Romanticist, or more so ; but the Classicist controls his passions, while the Romanticist delights to be carried away by his. One believes in self-possession, the other in enthusiasm. The Classicist's motto is *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, *ne quid nimis* ; he has the sense of measure, as well as the sense of form ; temperance in the whole, and balance of all the parts, are his ideals for a life or for a work of art. The Romanticist is unconfined by any of these limitations ; gladly he exaggerates, so he may but move you ; he seeks extreme effectiveness in

each part of his work, each moment of his life or of the life he depicts, without much regard to the whole; he knows not when to stop, not having considered the parts with relation to the whole, nor seen the end from the beginning. Power and not perfection is his ideal. His work is uncontrolled, overflowing, confused, but rich in life, energy, aspiration. The Classic ideal has been briefly summed up in a passage of Montaigne: "The virtue of the soul does not consist in flying high, but in walking orderly; its grandeur does not exercise itself in grandeur but in mediocrity; . . . nor so much in mounting and pressing forward, as in knowing how to govern and circumscribe itself . . . demonstrating itself better in moderation than in eminence." As against this, we may set the Romantic conception condensed into a single phrase by Madame de Staël: "The greatest things that man has done, he owes to the torturing sense of the incompleteness of his fate." The Classicist finds his ideal in the real, his achievement in the possible, his highest aspiration in a reasoned submission to fate or to "whatever gods there be." The Romanticist strives to snatch his ideal from some distant star, to catch not time but eternity by the forelock, to grasp the infinite with finite hands; he necessarily fails in his attempt, but he heartens himself with the belief that life or art should be judged not by its achievement but by its aspirations, that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp." He says with Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra:—

"What I aspired to be  
And was not, comforts me."

Philosophically, this aspect of Romanticism finds its most characteristic expression in Fichte's "Science of Knowledge"; poetically, in the works of Shelley and Browning.

A few examples of the contrast may be suggested. It is the Greek Drama as against the Elizabethan; Lear, Hamlet, Cordelia, with their unsolved tragic problems, as against

(Edipus, Orestes, Antigone. Taking examples within the literature of one nation, we may set Racine's *Andromaque* against Victor Hugo's *Triboulet*, as examples of parental devotion; or Milton's *Satan* against Byron's *Manfred* and Browning's *Caliban*, as embodiments of revolt. As examples of prose style we may set that of Thucydides against De Quincey's. Of the two elements which make up plastic beauty — form and color — the first is Classic, the second Romantic; so we may set Greek sculpture over against modern painting as typical Classic and Romantic arts; within each art, however, we may distinguish Classic and Romantic epochs; in French painting, for instance, the seventeenth as against the nineteenth century; in sculpture, Phidias as against Michelangelo; or in music, Bach and Haydn as against Schubert, Chopin, and Berlioz.

Classic art is the highest; for its end is perfection. Its ideal is beautiful reasonableness, and the creation of a reasonable beauty, an ideal worthy especially to be considered by the Northern peoples, who are not in the habit of uniting beauty and reason, either in their conceptions or in their practice; relying as they do on a supposed separate faculty, which they vaguely call the imagination, for the creation of beauty. But Classic art attains its peculiar end more rarely than the Romantic. True Classic work must be shaped from within outward, must grow in the mind of the artist to perfect form, must be fused by the fire of his genius before it can be run into the perfect mold. Only baser metal can be bent and shaped without the aid of that fire.

Suppose that Classic art, with the characteristics which I have mentioned, be taken as a model for imitation. Try to be orderly, and you will be tame; to be calm, self-possessed, measured, and you will be dull; to be typical, universal, and you will be commonplace; to be finished, and you will only be polished. Art becomes artifice, form becomes formality,

order becomes narrowness, reason becomes rationalism ; in short, the Classic or the neo-Classic becomes pseudo-Classic. It is against the pseudo-Classic, not against the true Classic, that the so-called Romantic revolt of the end of the eighteenth century is directed. This is a very important point, and one which brings us to the historical aspect of our subject.

For, as we have classified different arts and individuals by the classic-romantic criterion, so we can classify different nations and epochs in the history of Literature. The Greek and Latin Literatures are Classic ; so, on the whole, are the more recent Literatures of the nations of the South of Europe, while the nations of the North are Romantic ; this is of course the distinction first made by Madame de Staël in 1800. France occupies a middle position, though naturally and by inheritance tending rather toward genuine Classicism. Taking the whole of European Literature by epochs, we may say that the Middle Ages were a Romantic period. The Renaissance is more difficult to define, but may perhaps be called a Classical epoch with a Romantic temper ; in England the Classical character of the age was almost obliterated by the strong Romantic spirit of the nation. In the seventeenth century the Romantic temper of the Renaissance was subdued, and Classicism gradually came to dominate all Europe, under the leadership of France. In the eighteenth century Classicism itself became imitative and second-hand. The late seventeenth century was a genuine Classical epoch, especially in France. The eighteenth century was pseudo-Classic.

Historically considered, therefore, the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is first of all a revolt against the pseudo-Classic, against rationalism, convention, artifice, dullness, narrowness, formality, and rules of all kinds. This revolt soon becomes revolution, emancipation, and the complete creation of a new society. Freedom is its war-cry, individual feeling its basis of citizenship in the new republic of letters. The liberty of the individual, and the

right to expression in Literature of each individual's inmost and most peculiar feelings, whether typical or not, whether rational or not, whether social or anti-social, — in short, the rights of the individual ego to complete independence and self-expression, — that is what the Romantic movement first of all stands for. So, very definitely, it is the French Revolution in Literature. Pascal had said, "the ego is hateful." Rousseau begins his "Confessions" by saying, "I am like no man that I have ever seen ; I dare to believe I am unlike any man that exists." For this very reason he feels justified in writing his Confessions. That book, from the amazing address to the Supreme Being which we find on the first page, to the insanity of the end, is egotism run mad. Montaigne has been called an egotist ; but he was a social egotist ; he wrote for companionship ; "if there be any person in need of good company, in France or elsewhere, who can like my humor, let him but whistle, and I will come running." Rousseau, on the other hand, is an unsocial and anti-social egotist. Yet this emphasis upon individual feeling and its expression, of which Rousseau is the extreme example, renewed Literature. It brought back the lyric mood, and it brought back sentiment, which had been banished for more than a century. At first sentiment and sentimentality were not distinguished from each other ; we find sentimentality disagreeably predominating in the whole tribe of Rousseau's successors ; but it was the return of sentiment which made possible Goethe's early lyric and all that followed in Germany ; Musset, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and the rest in France ; and English poetry from Burns to Tennyson.

The love of nature, or the return to nature, is usually, and rightly, spoken of as one of the chief characteristics of the Romantic movement. To follow nature had, however, been one of the chief precepts of the Classicists from Aristotle to Boileau and Pope. It might be better to say that the Romantic movement is characterized by a complete change

in the sense of the word nature. To the Classicist, nature meant, to be sure, the whole universe of created things; but his universe was anthropocentric. Man, the end and aim of all things, the center and type of nature, the microcosmos, held for him a false place in the universe. The Romanticists went to the other extreme, as when Wordsworth said

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

This false tendency was soon corrected, however. Not to mention Scott and Byron, Goethe and Balzac, it was not long before Browning came with his intense interest in "Man's thoughts, loves, hates," and with his whole emphasis laid upon "The incidents in the development of a Soul." Meanwhile the love of nature, in the Romantic sense, had not only produced Wordsworth, but had been the inspiration of so many poets and prose-writers that the mere list of their names would take more time than we can afford.

After personal feeling, and after observation of the world about us, the chief source of inspiration for Modern Literature is to be found in the accumulated treasure of the race — in the ideals and stories, the myths and religions, of the past; and in the literary and artistic models in which this life of the past has expressed itself. This source of inspiration and imagery is for modern Europe threefold: the literatures of Greece and Rome, with their mythology; Biblical Literature and the Christian religion; and the Middle Ages with their chivalric ideals and romantic stories, some of these coming down from still earlier ages and bringing with them the body of northern mythology and folklore. The last of these was perhaps the most important for our modern Romantic movement; but its relative importance has been greatly over-emphasized. Not only medievalism, but a renewed and

broadened interest in *all the past*, characterized the Romantic movement. It was not reactionary; it had no desire to go back and live in the Middle Ages, or even to follow closely their literary models. It was merely freeing itself from a narrow tutelage, and demanding that all three of these chief sources of inspiration and imagery, not the classical alone, should be its free and full possession. The neo-classic period had willfully impoverished itself. The Romantic movement reclaimed its natural heritage and entered upon the enjoyment of all the riches of the past. There was no diminution of interest in the classics during the Romantic period; on the contrary, there sprang up a more intelligent enthusiasm for them and a truer knowledge of them; so much so that a genuine classic revival is a part of the Romantic movement itself, which in its revolt against the pseudo-classic appeals to the true classic for justification. This, and the awakening of the historic sense which goes with it, help to account for the classical period of German Literature after Goethe's "Italienische Reise"; for the "Voyage d'Anacharsis," and for André Chénier, in France; for the classical aspects of Keats and Shelley, and for Landor, in England; and for the transformation of art criticism and history, beginning in England with Stuart and Revett, and in Germany with Winckelmann. The renewed importance of the Bible and Christian story as an inspiration for art and Literature is a point which we need not dwell on, simply noting the wide influence of Milton, and the fact that even France repudiated Boileau's rule against using "les mystères chrétiens" as material, and produced in Chateaubriand's "Génie du Christianisme" the chief plea for such use.

At the same time there came, in all Europe, a deep spiritual "revival," in revolt against the rationalism, the utilitarianism, the superficial intellectuality, and the general "matter-of-fact-ness" of the eighteenth century. There came a new sense of the wonder and glory of the universe, of

the spiritual essence of all things, of the immanence of divine life in

. . . the light of setting suns  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

This is the "Renaissance of Wonder," and it is more. It renews religion and transforms philosophy. To it belongs all "subjective" thinking, which, just as much as subjective feeling and lyric expression, is of the "Romantic" school, in the technical sense of that word. It informs all that is most significant in thought, and in the literary embodiment of thought, from the German idealistic philosophers, through almost all the poets of Germany and England, to great prose-rhapsodists as different as Novalis and Lamennais, or Carlyle and Emerson.

On the less noble side, the "Renaissance of Wonder" manifested itself as a childish interest in the supernatural, of whatever kind. Some loved it for its faery beauty, some for its mystic symbolism; some, as Coleridge and later Poe, made of it a psychological allegory; others merely revelled or groveled in its horrors or grotesqueness. It was the chief stock-in-trade of minor writers too numerous to name, and even of most of the greater writers of the period when following the conventions of their age, till, as some one has suggested, Pope's famous line seemed to have been revised to read

The proper study of mankind is — spooks.

Even if this supernaturalism seems to most of us to-day a little cheap and tawdry — the wonder-light having gone out of it, or of our eyes — we should not forget that it produced, among other things, Goethe's "Faust"; and that in "Faust" all of its different characteristics are embodied.

Just as the Romantic movement turned back to the past,



especially to the Middle Ages, seeking there the period to which it could most easily appeal in its revolt against the neo-classic and pseudo-classic rule, the nearest epoch of comparative freedom and irregularity, spontaneity and naturalness, and an epoch of mystery, less known even than the older classical epoch, in the same way during the Romantic period each nation of Europe turned to the others, to find that freedom and newness, that strangeness and suggestiveness, that escape from the humdrum commonplace of ever present reality or convention which all desired. *Exotism* is almost as much a characteristic of the Romantic movement as medievalism. Each nation found in foreign lands not a "contemporary posterity," but a contemporary past. The men of letters sought there not critics but models, not living children of their spirit but adoptive ancestors. The Romantists, especially in France, rather felt the lack of ancestors; the French poets took André Chénier, who was half of the eighteenth century and the other half pure Greek, for their adoptive father, and another thorough-going Classicist, Ronsard, for the founder of their line. But they sought their maternal ancestry, so to speak, in Young, Thomson, Ossian, even Richardson, and found in Byron a long-lost elder half-brother; while the French dramatists adopted Shakspeare as the grandfather of a "literary progeny" that he would hardly have recognized. Germany had likewise adopted Shakspeare, Milton, Richardson, Macpherson, and the rest for literary ancestors. To drop the metaphor, we may say that Germany during the early part of the Romantic movement drew its inspiration from England, and from the France of Rousseau and Diderot, far more than from the German Middle Ages; that England, in the end of the eighteenth century down to about 1795, drew largely on France for its thought and inspiration, and in the first half of the nineteenth century on Germany for many of its literary impulses and for all that was of any value in its philosophical thought. France in the

eighteenth century let its strongest political thinking, as well as its newest literary impulses, follow England's, and in the nineteenth century, while drawing some inspiration and suggestions from Germany, let its literary ideals be characterized by nothing less than rampant Anglomania.

Both medievalism (or, as I have suggested we should say, more broadly, interest in the past) and exotism helped to overthrow the rules, and to make standards of taste relative where they had been absolute. Not only the conventions of neo-classic drama, such as the famous unities of time, place, and action, and the still more important fourth unity of *tone*, together with many other conventions, such as the limiting of the characters to a few noble or ignoble types, but also the whole aristocratic structure of Literature, divided into classes or *genres* between which intermarriage was forbidden, were all overthrown together. Wordsworth's quiet, persistent, successful battle for the rights of the humble and the simple — whether words, feelings, characters, or literary forms — was paralleled in France by Victor Hugo's spectacular "putting a red liberty-cap on the old Dictionary," as he called it, and setting the rabble in place of the nobles, the valet and bandit in place of the courtier and king, as heroes of serious drama. All words, all feelings, all characters, all classes of life, all aspects of nature, all ages of history, all types of literary form, received equal rights as citizens in the new Republic of Letters. And so Modern Literature, in its all-inclusive democracy, was made possible.

Perhaps in the future this will be looked back on as the most important service of the Romantic movement — that it cleared the way for the Literature that was to come. But as we look back on it to-day, we seem to see that it produced, in Germany, the greatest epoch of the nation's literature; in Italy, truer poets than had been known since Tasso's time, or perhaps since Petrarch's, and a new school of prose romance; in France, a new form of drama, where the tragic and comic,

cleverly juxtaposed in Hugo's plays, were truly fused in Musset's, whom "the Muse of Comedy had kissed upon the lips, and the Muse of Tragedy upon the heart"; in France it also produced three great poets, one of them the greatest master of verse-expression that modern times have known, and another the greatest poet of passion since Catullus; two historians perhaps unmatched for lyric power in narrative; and two novelists, the range and inclusiveness of whose picturing of life, from their different points of view, make subsequent attempts at so-called realism seem narrow and petty. In England, finally, it produced a renaissance of poetry that makes this period comparable, or even superior, to the Elizabethan age itself, in all departments except the most important one, poetic drama; a revival, or rather a new creation, of the romance, culminating in Scott; and a new school of prose, which bears the same relation to the *Spectator* as Keats's poetry to Pope's; and incidentally, it gave America Cooper and Longfellow, Hawthorne and Poe.

As the century developed, there came an inevitable reaction against many of the tendencies of Romanticism; but the greatest poets of the mid-century, Tennyson, Browning, Leconte de Lisle, Carducci, are all Romanticists, grown to maturity with the growth of the century itself — though one of them, Leconte de Lisle, represents also the classical side of the reaction, which naturally was strongest in France. Preraphaëlism in England, and the narrower school of art for art's sake in France, are Romanticism gone to seed; the very seed got frost-bitten in the age of science, and symbolism is perhaps the stunted winter crop that grows from a few of the scattered kernels. Meanwhile the roots of Romanticism survive, deep in the human heart, where no kind of frost can reach them, and may send forth strong, new shoots at any moment.

## XI

### ITALIAN LITERATURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY CARLO L. SPERANZA, PROFESSOR OF ITALIAN

ONLY of late years, scholars, mostly Italian, have made the *Settecento*, as the Italians call the eighteenth century, an object of assiduous study as to its literary culture, but the general public knows little or nothing about it. Hence it is ordinarily assumed that the eighteenth century is a continuation of its immediate predecessor, which means a continuation of a period of decadence, come to its close not any earlier than the invasion of Italy by the French army towards the end of the century. As a matter of fact, however, the *Settecento* was throughout a period of gradual recovery, memorable in Italian history for great intellectual activity, for great scholars, for political reforms, and for the rise, in its second half, of modern Italian Literature.

The scientific movement, started and carried on for years in Italy by Galileo Galilei, was never allowed to stop. After the death of the great master, his immediate disciples and then their followers, from Torricelli to Galvani and to Volta, from Redi to Morgagni and to Spallanzani, from Cassini to Oriani and to Piazzi, continued to apply Galilei's experimental method to the investigation of other phenomena of nature and of the human body, thereby enriching with new discoveries, or otherwise advancing, physics, anatomy, physiology, zoölogy, astronomy, and the other natural sciences.

Philosophy, too, which religious intolerance and the despotism of princes had stifled with the lives of Giordano Bruno and of Tommaso Campanella, was now revived by the solitary genius of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who, rising to high and new speculations upon the ideal life of mankind, its progresses and regresses, created the "*Scienza nuova*" (1730), the most original work of the time in Italy, or, indeed, in Europe. And, while Vico was absorbed in the contemplation of a remote past and in the discovery of the great laws of history, the jurist Pietro Giannone (1676-1748) wrote with political intent his "*Storia civile del reame di Napoli*" (1723), tracing not only the succession of events, but also, and more particularly, the changes in legislation, customs, and public institutions from the Roman days to the beginning of the eighteenth century. With his history Giannone preluded the movement, which brought to him persecution and imprisonment, and to the Church, later on, subjection, in temporal concerns, to the civil power.

At the same time with Giannone, Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), of the province of Modena, devoted his prodigiously active life to conscientious and critical search for historical truth in nearly every branch of human knowledge, uniting in a well-organized body all the historical sources of his nation, and revealing of this the whole life during the Middle Ages, till then shrouded in mystery, thereby deserving to be acclaimed the father of Italian historiography.

Contemporary with Muratori, to whom he suggested the idea of his monumental work, "*Rerum italicarum scriptores*," was the Venetian Apostolo Zeno (1669-1759), the initiator of the reform of the lyrical drama, and a very meritorious scholar and bibliographer. By the keenness of his historical criticism, Zeno, with his "*Dissertazioni Vossiane*," shed floods of light on the humanists and their works; with his "*Note*" to Fontanini's "*Eloquenza italiana*" corrected numberless errors, and with his scholarly "*Giornale dei letterati*"

endowed Italy with a periodical of positive science of great worth and influence.

Literary history had also its cultivators in Gian Mario Crescimbeni (1663–1728) and Saverio Quadrio (1695–1756), who were both greatly distanced by Girolamo Tiraboschi (1707–1773) of Bergamo. Tiraboschi's great "*Storia della letteratura italiana*," embracing the whole Italian culture since Etruscan times, is still on many points to be confidently and advantageously consulted by the student.

Besides Tiraboschi, I should mention, at least, Giovan Maria Mazzuchelli (1707–1765) for his collection of the biographies and bibliographies of all the Italian authors of every century, which death compelled him to leave very far from completion. Scores of other erudites and critics did for each one of many Italian cities or provinces what Mazzuchelli had designed to do for the whole of Italy.

In other branches of history, Scipione Maffei (1675–1755), the sovereign archeologist, and Luigi Lanzi (1731–1811), the Etruscan scholar, gained other claims to honor, the former by his "*Storia diplomatica*" and his "*Verona illustrata*," the latter by his "*Storia pittorica d' Italia*," in which he substituted the division by schools of painting for the biographical method of Vasari and the annalistic one of Balducci.

Indeed, the great advance in all departments of historical study, so fruitful of lasting benefits to science, made the eighteenth century in respect to the modern age, what the fifteenth had been in regard to the Italian Renaissance. Both the eighteenth and the fifteenth were centuries of erudition and criticism, only the fifteenth was more exclusive in its Classicism, and the eighteenth more comprehensive in the universality of its culture, and in its criticism broader, more positive, and more skilful.

It will not be amiss at this point to notice that the intellectual movement which I have tried briefly to delineate, began to gain impetus soon after the elimination in 1714

from Italy of the execrable Spanish domination, and that it greatly expanded after 1748, when the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had at last put an end to the incessant wars that had ravaged the country, and secured for it the blessings of peace for nearly fifty years.

Concerning Literature in general, aside from history, and more particularly concerning poetry, the Settecento opened and remained long under the sway of the Academy of Arcadia, which was established in Rome ten years before the end of the seventeenth century. That Academy, which soon spread offshoots all over Italy, by inculcating the maxim that noble poetry does not consist in loftiness of concepts, but in excellence of imitation, made of art a mere mechanical play. Moreover, by catering to petty ambitions and vanities, it fostered the evil plant of dilettantism. Consequently, there sprang up everywhere in the country swarms of poetasters ever ready to effuse their amorous or religious languors, or their enthusiasms, over the most futile occurrences, such as an invitation to dinner, the death of a cat, and the like; and as the drift ran in Italy, as it did in France and in Germany, toward pastoral subjects, the outcome was a deluge of madrigals, canzonette, and sonnets, empty of thought and of sentiment, nerveless, oversweet, and, in their affectation of simplicity, naturalness, and innocence of shepherds' feelings and manners which had no existence in life, essentially false.

However, Arcadia obtained the object for which it was founded, by successfully leading the reaction against the crazy extravagances and the bombast of the Seicento; in the course of the years it changed its ways for the better, showing more measure and correctness in concepts; it introduced fine new metres; through Paolo Rolli (1687-1765) it produced canzonette of an enchanting grace; through Innocenzo Frugoni's sonorous verse its songs took up some semblance of force, and, finally, Arcadia could boast of having

nourished with its own milk a real poet, Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782).

Educated by his patron, the illustrious jurist Giavincenzo Gravina, in the austere Classicism, Metastasio, after his benefactor's death, went to Naples, where he learned music from the composer Porpora, and in 1724, with the performance of his first lyrical drama, "*Didone abbandonata*," obtained an immense success. New triumphs followed through his "*Siroe*," "*Catone*," "*Semiramide*," and other dramas, which on the wing of song carried his name beyond the Alps, and in 1730 secured for him the position, till then held by Apostolo Zeno, of imperial court poet at Vienna. From Vienna Metastasio actually swayed the gentle hearts of all the nations, so fascinating were his dramas in their perfect correspondence to the artistic ideal of his days, in the soft harmony of their verse, and the gentleness of their sentiments. Indeed, Metastasio's lyrical dramas were, and can still be, enjoyed in themselves without the music to which they were set.

Besides the dramatic, the comic opera then flourished, to which composers like Cimarosa and Paisiello gave the musical notes, and which culminated in Galiani and Lorenzi's "*Socrate immaginario*" (1775), one of the most genial artistic productions of dramatic literature in Italy. Soon, however, the literary text lost its importance, and the lyrical drama decayed as if overpowered by the music, into which the words, now empty of meaning, evaporated.

A kind of poetry largely cultivated during the first decades of the century was the burlesque, a fatuous kind, to be sure, but acceptable to the society of that time, frivolous, thoughtless, weak, and, in spite of its pseudo-heroic and sentimental attitudes, not averse to hearty laughter. It was then that Niccolò Forteguerri (1634-1735) of Pistoia, entirely outside of Arcadian influence, continuing Berni's classical tradition, with his "*Ricciardetto*," created the mock-heroic poem, amidst the merriment of which the Italian chivalric epic died.



The "Ricciardetto" was published posthumously in 1738, and not many years afterwards, the dogmatic rationalism of Descartes found its way to Italy, where it fed and hastened the course of the national thought. Later on, after the middle of the century, there became manifest in Italy a deep and general interest in the philosophical and reforming movement which from France irradiated all over Europe. Then it was that such serious and vigorous, if not always original, Italian thinkers, economists, jurists, philosophers, as Antonio Genovesi, Ferdinando Galiani, Gaetano Filangeri, Mario Pagano, all Neapolitans, Niccolo Spedalieri, a Sicilian, Pietro Verri, and Cesare Beccaria, both of Milan, formed a worthy counterpart of the French Encyclopedists. They directed their studies to the phenomena of the moral and of the economical world, as well as to the forms of law for the practical purpose of promoting the welfare and improving the government of the people. And since, by the already mentioned treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the many states into which Italy was formerly divided were reduced to ten, and, except for Lombardy (still remaining in the possession of Austria) these had been restored to independence, those new doctrines spread more easily, and helped the formation of an enlightened public opinion. Led by this, and still more by their own interest, the Italian rulers accepted those doctrines, and, with the advice and aid of liberal and competent ministers, realized them in penal and administrative laws, abolishing privileges and immunities, freeing commerce and industry from absurd legal hindrances, encouraging agriculture, inaugurating, in short, a new era of progress in Italian history.

Of this progress the best evidence was furnished by the great innovation which almost at once took place in Italian Literature, and which had beneficent effects upon society. The signs of the innovation became visible in literary criticism, in the broadening of the culture, in the great fondness

for music and disregard for the words, the importance of which was preferably appreciated in writings of philosophical character and of practical purpose; and, above all, in a desire to get into touch with the thoughts and sentiments expressed in the literatures of other nations, whose influence upon the Literature of Italy had begun to make itself felt here and there since the beginning of the Settecento, or even somewhat earlier.

This influence became more intense and universal with the advancing of the century, and, favored by the prevailing of a cosmopolitan spirit, by the travels, and the intercourse of many Italian diplomats, men of letters, and adventurers with the peoples of other countries, became, after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, one of the characteristics of the national culture. An immense number of works, French, English, Spanish, in prose or in poetry, were translated into Italian by illustrious, mediocre, and obscure men of letters; a new eclecticism accustomed the minds of readers to like and to appreciate the most widely different literary products, which were eagerly studied, imitated, or assimilated.

Thus Italy, who in the time of her Renaissance had been the teacher of Literature to the other nations, little by little adapted herself to become in her turn their disciple, happy whenever some of her men, as Vico, Beccaria, Galiani, Maffei, and others, enabled her by their productions to make some new returns for what she was receiving. At all events, from the communion with other European literatures, new blood was transfused into the enfeebled frame of Italian Literature, that is, ideas, sentiments, and tendencies.

The most potent instrument of renovation was literary criticism; which, formerly used with his usual felicitous intuitions by Vico, by the jurist Gravina, and by Muratori, was now vigorously taken up by a number of writers in order to combat imitation of the classic Italian Literature, and to promote innovation in form as well as in substance both in prose and in

poetry. And, in order to spread more widely their ideas, the critics gave preference to agile and current forms, similar to those of the periodicals of our own day, adopting, consciously or unconsciously, a style and a language more closely resembling the French, then familiar to everybody in Italy, than the Italian commonly used by the literati. Indeed, one of the many periodicals, "Il Caffè" of Pietro Verri, openly and proudly proclaimed that its writers would never allow themselves to be hampered by rules of Italian grammar, or by care to preserve the purity of the national language.

The critics were often at variance and quarreled with each other, as the philosophers did; but they were all actuated by one spirit, one purpose, namely, emancipation from rules and from authority save that of reason and of nature. First to start criticism upon the new road was, probably, the Venetian Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764) with some of his "Lettere" and of his "Saggi," though he is best known through his "Newtonianismo per le dame," which was soon translated into the principal European languages. A much traveled man of varied learning, a miscellaneous writer, a friend of Voltaire and of Frederick the Great of Prussia, who made him a count, Algarotti felicitously typified in himself the more characteristic forms of the Italian thought of the Settecento.

In his critical work he was followed by the Mantuan Jesuit, Saverio Bettinelli (1718-1808), noted for his "Storia del Risorgimento d'Italia dopo il mille," by far the best of his works, written under the influence of his greatly admired friend Voltaire. As a critic Bettinelli did not entirely lack constructive ideas, but, except in political matters, seemed to be driven by a mania to demolish everything. Thus, in his "Lettere virgiliane," and next in his "Lettere inglesi," under color of combating blind worship of Italian classics, he repudiated the greater part of the past and present poetry of the nation, beginning with Dante's "Commedia," of which he disapproved everything save a few fragments. The confuters of Betti-

nelli's invective were many, but Gaspare Gozzi (1713–1786) of Venice excelled them all with his brilliant “*Difesa di Dante*”; and, as Gozzi, mainly through his “*Osservatore*”—the first periodical of manners in Italy, in form and moral purpose similar to Addison’s *Spectator*—had won the reputation of a man of good taste, of liberal ideas, of impartial judgment, and as an excellent prose-writer, his “*Difesa*” carried the more weight and contributed considerably to the great revival, already under way, of the till then long neglected study of Dante; another sure indication this that the national culture and character were on the rise.

Of a temperament wholly different from Gozzi’s was the Piedmontese Giuseppe Baretti; restless, impetuous, presumptuous, an ardent admirer of free England, where he resided between 1751 and 1760, and where, in close friendship with Johnson and Reynolds, he spent the last twenty years or so of his life. In 1763 Baretti began in Venice the publication of his “*Frusta letteraria*,” or literary whip, which he wielded mercilessly right and left, hitting Petrarchists, Arcadians, and all sorts of empty writers, and making it a potent instrument of sound innovation in literary criticism and literature in general, although not infrequently letting it fall in the wrong direction. In practice Baretti adhered to his theories, writing his most entertaining familiar letters from Portugal, Spain, and France, as well as his “*Frusta*,” in a prose as solid and robust as his convictions, and of a clearness and pictorial efficacy worthy of serving as a model.

Last among the more conspicuous critics of the period came the Paduan Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730–1808) with his “*Saggio sulla filosofia delle lingue*” (1785). In this carefully thought-out work, Cesarotti, following the inspiration of French thinkers and philologists, turned his fine speculations on the nature of human speech against the despotism of the “*Accademia della Crusca*,” which presumed to restrict the whole Italian language within the narrow compass of its own vocabulary,

registering, almost exclusively, the language used by some of the Tuscan writers of the Trecento. It cannot be denied that on the whole Cesarotti with his "Saggio" helped to emancipate the language from the caprices of fashion, and of incompetent authority, and to substitute for them the legitimate guidance of reason and of good taste.

A few years before Cesarotti had published his Italian translation, in harmonious blank eleven-syllable lines, interspersed with lyrical strophes, of James Macpherson's so-called Ossianic poems, and the public had received it with enthusiasm. Such an enthusiasm was quite natural; for the Italians, now imbued with the emancipating and humanitarian ideas of the new philosophy, and more or less acquainted with foreign literatures, had grown tired of the idyls and pastorals of Arcadia, and of the rhetorical composure and monotonous light of the literary art of the classic type. They had grown so eager for new forms and new subjects, that they now took delight even in the extravagant and absurd romances and plays of Pietro Chiari (1711-1785); they took delight in the nursery-tales and in the fairy-tales which Carlo Gozzi, Gaspare's brother, arranged for the actors of the extemporaneous comedy of masks to develop and enact. No wonder, then, if the Italians so eagerly welcomed the heroic deeds, the misfortunes and loves narrated, and the frightful storms described, in the Ossianic poems.

When the first part of Cesarotti's translation of Ossian was published, in 1763, Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) of Venice had already ushered in the new Italian Literature; new, for he had at last led it back to nature and real life, after it had been so long divorced from them.

At first, to please the taste of the public, or to obey the commands of the impresarios, Goldoni produced lyrical dramas, historical dramas, tragedies, that is to say, things for which his genius was not fitted. However, he never abandoned his long-

cherished ideal of superseding the now decrepit extemporaneous comedy of masks, and that of intrigue, which he thought could only be achieved by the creation of good plays based on character and life.

So, as soon as an opportunity offered itself, he seized it, and set about his reform. At the beginning he proceeded cautiously and gradually, changing this or that feature of the improvised comedy, but when his first entirely written out play, and then the second and the next, were applauded by the audiences, feeling sure of his ground, he poured out comedy after comedy, some twenty in verse, the rest, perhaps eighty or more, in prose, either in the Venetian dialect or in the national language. These plays are of various degrees of merit, but all together actually reproduce Italian life as it had then narrowed itself down in Venice. They are rich in comical situations, naturally springing from everyday occurrences, and admirably lending themselves to the natural development of the characters. These are invariably living men and women, ordinarily simple, rather common and superficial, consistent with the author's fundamental conception of his reform, and with the constitution of his mind, which, unlike Molière's, seemed to shrink from deep thinking or too keen analyzing of sentiments. Certainly Goldoni's plays leave something to be desired in point of language and literary style, which are careless, but in clearness of conception, inexhaustible wealth, and variety of inventions, in the gay grace and happy brilliancy of the dialogue, in absolute faithfulness to nature, and in the comicity and humanity of the characters, are yet unmatched. No wonder, then, if in Germany Goldoni's comedies enjoyed great popularity, if in France they were imitated by Diderot and by Voltaire, and if in our own day many of them delight Italian audiences, for, while true to the manners of a past age, they still retain all their original freshness.

In poetry the great innovator was a Lombard priest, Giuseppe Parini (1729-1799). With him truth, justice, hu-

manity were not an idle ideal, as was the case with many of his contemporaries, but a religion. Actuated by this, Parini trained his natural artistic powers in the study of the ancient classics, especially of Vergil, and used them in his lyrics and his satire to make poetry resume her mission of civil and moral education, and at the same time gaining for himself a place among the great poets.

His odes are the poetry of the humanitarian sentiments of his time. As to form, though preserving the meters of what the Italians call melic poetry, for rapidity of movements and of touches, for sweet and temperate melody, lucidity and efficacy of expression, they are, with very few exceptions, works of singular beauty.

Of his satire, the "Giorno," the first two parts, the "Mattino" and the "Mezzogiorno" came to light in 1763 and 1765, the two others, "Vespro" and "Notte," only after the poet's death and unfinished.

The poem is a vast picture of the whole degenerate contemporary society, such as no other satirical literature, Italian or foreign, had ever till then produced. In it Parini gave the satire forms and movements entirely new, representing in a truly masterful way the manifold action of that society in its continuous development, and creating what has aptly been called the "epic of satire."

Of the lyrical, didactic, or satirical poets of Parini's time it may suffice to say that in endeavoring to imitate classical examples, they more or less contributed to the rejuvenating of poetical forms and to infusing into them new life and vigor. Of such poets I will only mention Giovanni Fantoni (1755-1807) and Aurelio Bertola (1753-1798). The former, because by his rhymes he announced the death of Arcadia and the beginning of a new era; the latter, because in his "Poesie campestri e marittime" he wedded the Spirit of Gessner's German idyls with the tradition of the classic bucolic poets; he translated into Italian Young's "Night Thoughts," and was the first to make the Italians acquainted with German Literature.

Tragedy, owing to the excellence it had achieved in France with Corneille, Racine, and their followers, had, in the period I have been speaking of, become the fashion in Italy. But time has long buried in oblivion the innumerable tragic compositions then produced; it has only spared the "Merope" of Maffei, the "Giovanni Giscala" of Alfonso Varano, and perhaps one or two more. Real tragedy rose in Italy only when the poet came, who within the weary classic frame then in vogue, could rouse the throb of life by the heat of his own passion.

That poet came at last, and was the Piedmontese nobleman Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803): a resolute heart, good, generous, rebellious to force, pliant to kindness, impetuous, of a strong, imperious will, in short, a very complex character, swayed by two passions, a profound abhorrence of tyranny, and an ardent love of country and of liberty. The conflict between these two passions he made the center round which runs the rapid action of all his tragedies, except his "Mirra" and "Saul," the latter of which is not only Alfieri's masterpiece, but also one of the most notable dramatic conceptions in the modern theater.

All the faults, as also all the excellences, of Alfieri's tragic productions are a necessary outcome of his conception of tragedy, constantly intended by him to make his fellow-countrymen "free, strong, and generous."

It has been said that the Alfierian tragedy is the French tragedy stripped of its flesh. This is true in one respect, that of form. For Alfieri, seeing that the classic form of the French tragedy was universal, adopted it without discussion as legitimate and regular. But into it he cast his own mighty individuality, wholly modern, and thereby created poetry, created the national conscience, and pre-announced the Italian revolution of the next century.

A new Literature that at its very beginning can boast of three such names as Goldoni, Parini, and Alfieri, gives promise of becoming once more in time a factor in European culture.





## XII

### SPANISH LITERATURE

BY HENRY ALFRED TODD, PROFESSOR OF ROMANCE  
PHILOLOGY

LIKE more than one of those who have preceded me in this series of lectures, I stand abashed at the unwonted difficulty of presenting within a single hour anything like an adequate appreciation of the spirit of one of the world's great literatures. Nothing but a consciousness that listeners and speaker must be alike imbued with a sense of the limitations of such an undertaking could give requisite courage for the attempt. Yet it is fitting to reflect that, apart from the Literature of our mother English speech, there is no Literature of modern times that so richly deserves sympathetic and illuminating consideration as does the Literature of Spain, in a course such as this, given at the metropolitan gateway of two new continents, both of which have been so largely occupied and developed by populations of Spanish race and traditions and of Hispanic speech, in a country whose own Literature has been enriched by the monumental works of an Irving, a Ticknor, and a Prescott in the past, and in a city stirred in the present by the vitalizing activities of so broadly conceived an institution as the Hispanic Society of America.

At the outset of this study, let us remind ourselves briefly of the historic background of the subject with which we have to deal. Most interestingly and curiously situated at the extremity of its own continent, close to the desert-bounded strip of a strangely alien neighbor continent, and at the limits

of the great intercontinental sea, about which have fluctuated a long succession of civilizations, the territory of the Hispanic Peninsula contains stored up within itself relics of successive strata of races, incursions, migrations, and traditions. It will be sufficient for our purpose merely to mention the names of the earliest races, the problems of whose history on Spanish soil are no less real than they are obscure — Iberians, Basques, and Celts. Even for the Phoenicians, the date of their arrival and the precise points of their establishment in the Peninsula are unknown, but we reach the more accurate data of history with the incursions of their colonial children, the Carthaginians, who, after the First Punic War, had demonstrated to them the importance of the more complete possession of Spain, accomplished under Hamilcar, the father of Hannibal, virtually the entire conquest and occupation of the country. It was the Second Punic War that brought the Roman conquest of Spain, under which we find standing forth individual exemplars of that high-minded force and dignity of bearing that has ever since been significant of the Spanish character. It is said that the first foreigner who ever rose to the Roman consulship, as well as the first to gain the honors of a public triumph, was Balbus, from Cadiz; while Trajan, from Seville, was the first foreigner to sit on the throne of the Roman world. Of particular interest to us is it to note that from an early period Latin writers and orators begin to be produced in Spain. It was Portius Latro, of Cordova, who was the first to open in Rome a school for rhetoric, at which he enjoyed the patronage of no less distinguished disciples than Octavius Cæsar, Mæcenæ, and Ovid. The two Senecas, father and son, were both natives of Cordova. Lucan, author of the "*Pharsalia*," was a Spaniard, and so were Quintilian the rhetorician, Florus the historian, Martial the epigrammatist, Columella the writer on agriculture.

With these indications of the prevalence of Latin speech and civilization in Spain, we can well understand the pre-

paredness of the country for the gradual introduction of the Christian religion through its accredited medium of instruction and ritual, the Latin tongue. Whatever may be the true account and date of the introduction of Christianity, it seems established that by the year 300 the age of persecution was passed, and Christian churches were openly supported. Next follows the long story of the invasions and migrations of the Northern barbarians, Franks, Vandals, Alans, who were driven forward by the oncoming Tartars from Upper Asia. Later follow the Goths, until by the end of the fifth century the Visigothic dynasty was established and acknowledged throughout the greater part of Spain. The Visigoths, it is important to note, had been already converted to the Christian faith by the venerated Bishop Ulfilas, so that this invasion served only to confirm the hold of Christianity on the people of Spain, while at the same time bringing into the Spanish language the vigorous admixture of Germanic elements which have ever since continued to characterize it.

But the tale of endless incursions is not yet told. Still another momentous invasion was to burst all unforeseen upon Spain, threatening to carry before it, not indeed cultivation and refinement, which could scarcely have existed in such troublous times, but the Christian institutions that had been so long and so laboriously built up — the tremendous inpouring of Arab hordes, who came bringing with them into the doomed Peninsula all the weird picturesqueness, the patriotic zeal, and the religious intensity that had been so rapidly gathering momentum. Indeed, within less than a century's time the trembling balance of Mohammed's fate had turned in favor of his cause in nearly all of Western Asia and Northern Africa. So sweeping a victory as that which attended the descent of the Moors near Gibraltar in 711, and which had in three years' time spread over all of Spain excepting the mountain fastnesses of the Northwest, is scarcely recorded in history;

and when we reflect that for four centuries the domination of the Moors continued unabated, and for three centuries longer struggled and continued to linger on Spanish soil, we can well understand that we are in presence of a factor in the social and intellectual development of the Spanish people that counts strongly in all their early history. It was Théophile Gautier, I believe, who remarked that Africa begins at the Pyrenees.

Precisely in the midst of this crucial period of the great conflict between the Christians and the Moors in Spain there emerges the earliest and most majestic literary monument of the heroic era of her history — a poem of matchless simplicity and dignity, the "Poem of the Cid" — "El poema del Cid." Though preserved but rudely and imperfectly in a single manuscript dating long subsequent to the original composition of the work, and constituting to this day, as far as the problems connected with the technique of its composition are concerned, the despair of the most competent scholars, this heroic composition of something like four thousand lines may well serve for all centuries to come to stand as a noble torso of the earliest surviving literary expression of the Spanish spirit in the vernacular speech of Spain. Impressively archaic in language, earnestly unaffected in style, by turns familiar and lofty in expression, exemplifying all the human passions and virtues of a race striving for the expulsion of a powerful invader, this single poem might well be studied in detail as embodying, actually and prophetically, the genius of the people whose long preparation for greatness we have been rapidly reviewing.

Ruy Diaz de Bivar — that is to say, Rodrigo, son of Diego, of Bivar, known alike to Christians and Moors by the Arabic title of *Cid* or *Lord* — was the doughty warrior whose exploits excited at times the admiration, but more often the jealousy and suspicion, of his king, Alfonso. Thus, in the mutilated opening lines — which are not the beginning — of the poem,

we find the Cid under the ban and interdict of his sovereign, starting into exile:—

“De los sos ojos tan fuerte mientras lorando  
 Tornava la cabeça e estava los catando.  
 Vio puertas abiertas e uços sin cañados,  
 Alcandaras vazias sin pieles e sin mantos  
 E sin falcones e sin adtores mudados.  
 Sospiro myo Cid, ca mucho avie grandes cuydados.  
 Fablo myo Cid bien e tan mesurado:  
 ‘Grado a ti, señor padre, que estas en alto,  
 Esto me an buelto myos enemigos malos.’”

“The following translation of these lines is taken from Professor James Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s recent “Chapters on Spanish Literature,” p. 17:—

“With tearful eyes he turned to gaze upon the wreck behind:  
 His rifled coffers, bursten gates, all open to the wind:  
 No mantle left, nor robe of fur: stript bare his castle hall:  
 Nor hawk nor falcon in the mew, the perches empty all.  
 Then forth in sorrow went my Cid, and a deep sigh sighed he;  
 Yet with a measured voice, and calm, my Cid spake loftily—  
 ‘I thank thee, God our Father, thou that dwellest upon high,  
 I suffer cruel wrong to-day, but of mine enemy.’”

Followed by a troop of faithful friends, the Cid betakes himself to the regions held by the Moors, captures their castles, and finally gains their city of Valencia. By all this prowess he wins again, like David from Saul, the favor of his jealous prince, and wins in marriage for his two daughters the hands of two noble suitors, the infantes de Carrion, who prove, alas, all unworthy of this honor, and are punished for their cruelty, while the daughters of the Cid are in turn wedded, with still greater honors, to the royal princes, respectively, of Navarre and Aragon.

Thus, in words too few to give more than a vague impression

of the poet's story has been brought before us the image of Spain's earliest heroic figure. That he was probably a historic and not a purely mythical character matters little to us here. Although the facts have been much disputed, the historians of Literature tell us who his father was, that he himself was born about the year 1040, that he was married to Jimena, a cousin of King Alfonso VI, in 1074, that he was exiled by his king in 1081, with still fuller data for the remainder of his career. But what concerns our purpose is to know that this was the poetic hero who fired the imaginations, and filled the memories, and embodied the ideals of the Spanish people at the earliest period of their surviving Literature. To us it signifies that so great was the part he played and the place he filled in the heroism of his time, that by the Arabic historians he is constantly spoken of as "Al-Kambeyator," the Arabic transliteration of his Spanish title "El campeador," "the Champion"; while, on the other hand, by the Spanish chroniclers and poets he is more frequently called by the Arabic designation "Sid," "Lord," early attached to him and everywhere recurring in the "Poema del Cid." For us, as investigators of the spirit of heroic Spanish verse, the moving impulse is to discover, if we may, in the rugged "Poema del Cid" the vital spark that kindled, five centuries later, through the intermediary of the "Mocedades del Cid" of Guillen de Castro, in the brain of the Frenchman Corneille (in his drama of the "Cid") the glowing picture of Spanish chivalry that typifies more widely and more perfectly than any other non-Spanish production the heroic genius of the Spanish race.

We have spoken of the spirit of the "Poem of the Cid"; what is there to say of its origin and form? Scholars have been ready to find in it evidences of the influence of the French "Chansons de geste," notably, of course, of the "Chanson de Roland." That the "Roland" was known in Spain at the time of the composition of the "Poema del Cid" is virtually certain; that the author of the "Cid" had heard sung or recited

the "Song of Roland" is even probable. But, granting the correctness of this view, what is surprising is that the tone, the touch, the swing, the vigor of the "Poema del Cid," should all be so palpably different from the same characteristics of the "Roland"; while it is no less true that the tone and spirit of the Spanish poem are as truly and distinctively Spanish as that the tone and touch of the Frankish poem are distinctly French.

But, this being true of the "Cid," what was after all the destiny on Spanish soil — where indeed the very scene of the poem was laid — of the marvelous legend of "Roland" that made its way triumphant throughout all the rest of Europe? It is a noteworthy fact, and significant of the comparative independence of the epic spirit in Spain, that the "Chanson de Roland," which various scholars believe to have influenced the unknown author of the "Poema del Cid," found no direct imitation, so far as we know, in Spain. It is not until a much later period, that of the Spanish "romancero," the great collection of Ballad poetry in which so much of the genius of the Spanish people is embodied, that we are able to discover the true spiritual descendants in Literature of the paladins of the French epic who fought under Charlemagne and Roland in the defiles of Roncevaux. In the Spanish ballads the defeat of Roland, as the army of Charlemagne was withdrawing through the passes of the Pyrenees, is attributed by the native folk-poets, not to the treacherous Basques, to whom it was in reality due, nor, as in the French epic, to the overwhelming number of the Saracens, but to the patriotism of the Christian Spaniards, who considered their country to have been invaded, and who joined their forces to drive out Charlemagne and all his hosts. To meet their ideas of national and poetic justice a native hero must be exalted, and such a one was found in the person of a character, Bernardo del Carpio, who seems to have been purely imaginary, or at most one who had distinguished himself, in the far-off past, by fighting against the Arabs and not against



the French, and around this national hero there grew up a wealth of Ballad Literature in which the fictitious exploits of Bernardo are exalted, culminating in a personal combat between Roland and Bernardo del Carpio, in which of course it is the latter who is victorious. Thus, while Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, and England are satisfied in turn to take up without notable alterations the story of the victories of Charlemagne and his paladins, Spain, on the lips of her poets, turns the situation to the enhancement of her own national renown. Nor let it be supposed that the older and more traditional glories of the "Cid Campeador" were suffered to grow dim in this epico-lyric period of the Spanish "romancero," a form which there is the less need here to illustrate by quotations, even were there time to do so, because of the well-known and spirited English versions by Lockhart, Southey, and Gibson.

It is time to point out, what indeed is so universally felt to be true as to sound like a commonplace, that throughout all the Middle Ages Spain was the most naturally chivalresque of all the Christian nations, which has well been attributed to the fact that, while the other Western nations were seeking an outlet for their chivalrous energies by carrying the Cross to Constantinople, the Holy Land, and Egypt, Spain was for seven hundred years shut up to internecine conflict for political and religious supremacy with a highly civilized as well as a brave and fanatical intruder; while, on the side of Literature, all the sources of enchantment and refinement that prevailed elsewhere in Europe poured into Spain their refreshing streams. In addition to the French "Chansons de geste," there came with the pilgrims of Saint James of Compostella (Santiago de Compostela) the weird and charming tales of the Celtic cycle of King Arthur and Merlin, tales of love and mystery, of giants and of dwarfs, of fairies and of sorcerers, of enchantments and of love philters.

This was the efflorescence of joyous gaiety that followed

the final expulsion of the Moors from Spain and the glorious discovery of a new world by Christopher Columbus at the end of the fifteenth century. The course of the sixteenth saw the exuberant spread in Spain of the chivalrous romance in prose, a form of which the other nations were indeed beginning to tire a little, but which between Ferdinand the Catholic and Philip II developed in Spain with an amazing richness that degenerated speedily into all manner of imaginative excess and literary extravagance. In this orgy of unbridled productiveness personages of most incongruous origin were brought together and mingled in strange confusion: heroes of antiquity, Joshua and David with Alexander and Julius Cæsar, King Arthur with King Charlemagne, Godfrey de Bouillon with Robert the Devil, Lancelot of the Lake with Amadis of Gaul and Palmerin d'Oliva. For these fantastic tales the rage grew so intense that Guevara, the learned courtier of Charles the Fifth, declares that "men did read nothing in his time but such shameful books as 'Amadis de Gaula,' 'Tristan,' 'Primaleon,' and the like," and the works of this class were finally accounted so pernicious that "in 1553 they were prohibited by law from being printed or sold in the American colonies, and in 1555 the same prohibition, and even the burning of all copies of them extant in Spain itself, was earnestly asked for by the Cortes." Ticknor, in one of the notes to his history of this period, cites the following anecdote as evidence of the fanaticism of the upper as well as of the lower classes on the subject of books of chivalry! "A Knight came home one day from the chase, and found his wife and daughters and their women crying. Surprised and grieved, he asked them if any child or relation were dead. 'No,' they answered, suffocated with tears. 'Why then do you weep so?' he rejoined, still more amazed. 'Sir,' they replied, 'Amadis is dead.' They had read so far."

On October 9, 1547, was baptized Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. To have proceeded so far without having made any

direct allusion to his life or work has only been accomplished by deliberate intent; for while very much that comes after his time remains to be considered, his name and his influence so overshadow other Spanish names for the historian of Literature that to leave him even temporarily obscured comes only of conscious effort. If we pause for a moment to reflect, we shall perceive, without analysis or penetration that while the other great and universal works of Literature—the “Iliad,” the “Divine Comedy,” the dramas of Shakspeare—make their appeal chiefly to the mature and conscious lover of Literature, the immortal story of the good knight of La Mancha is the joy and consolation alike of young and old, of grave and gay, of lettered and unlettered, a work unique in the circumstances of its inception, its purpose, and its execution.

It was charmingly said of Cervantes in this University not long ago by Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly that “some men live their romances, and some men write them. It was given to Cervantes to do both, and, as his art was not of the impersonal order, it is scarcely possible to read his work without a desire to know more of the rich and imposing individuality which informs it.” With a boyhood apparently much like Shakspeare’s, containing a fair amount of schooling but no university training, his later life was at once far more troublous and far more romantic than that of his great contemporary. As he came to manhood, he could look back upon the glorious reign of the Emperor Charles the Fifth in which his childhood had been passed, and be stirred with the spirit of adventure that took him to Rome as a member of the household of Cardinal Acquaviva, at the time when Spain, Venice, and the Holy See were combining in a league against the Sultan of Turkey. He was in the hottest of the fight, on board one of the galleys of Don John of Austria, at the battle of Lepanto, in 1571, where he was seriously wounded. Four years later, on shipboard near Marseilles, he was captured by Moorish pirates and carried off to Algiers. There he became the slave of a Greek

renegade; made three most exciting but unsuccessful efforts to escape; and finally, in 1580, and in his thirty-fourth year, after five bitter years of slavery, was ransomed for five hundred ducats, settled in Madrid, and of necessity as well as by predilection betook himself to Literature as a congenial but precarious means of livelihood. Harsh vicissitudes and only partial success attended his endeavors, until, when approaching the age of sixty years, he became the author of one of the most famous books in the history of the world, quite probably begun and perhaps also ended in Seville jail, "The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha." The first part was published in 1605, the second in 1615, many important works having intervened. A little later, in the preface to his final composition, the romance of "Persiles and Sigismunda," he writes: "And so, farewell to jesting, farewell my merry humors, farewell my gay friends, for I feel that I am dying, and have no desire but soon to see you happy in the other life." And in a few days he was dead.

What was Cervantes' purpose in writing "Don Quixote"? The question has been much disputed, and many strained interpretations have been offered, one curious suggestion being that the book set forth "some of the undertakings and gallantries of the Emperor Charles V," while Daniel Defoe declared it to be an emblematic history of, and a just satire upon, the Duke de Medina Sidonia, "a person," as he says, "very remarkable at that time in Spain." But Cervantes himself has really answered the question as to the purpose which he had in view, when at the outset of the book he exclaims that "he looks to nothing but to undoing the vogue and authority throughout the world and among the common people, of the books of chivalry," while at the end of the second part, ten years later, he repeats that "he had had no other desire than to render abhorred of men the false and absurd stories contained in the books of chivalry."

And yet it cannot but be true that these declarations are

to some extent whimsical, or, as we might say in the waggish language of a later day, "Pickwickian." If ever there was a book in the world that, from the earliest chapters, grew and grew beyond its author's ken and first intention, surely that book is Cervantes' "Don Quixote." One can scarcely help believing that in the author's brain pretty much all the stock in trade for the new story were the gaunt figures of the ingenious gentleman and of Rocinante, and the holocaust of the books of chivalry in the courtyard under the attentive watch-care of the niece, the barber, and the curate. The return of the sprightly Don after the adventure with the traders of Toledo may well have been, in the writer's mind, the culmination of a mere short story, and the beginning for the worthy gentleman of a monomania cured and a life of better things. In fact, having got only a little farther on, at the end of Chapter VIII, the author concludes "Part First," so-called, and begins Part II of his expanding tale, a division altogether disregarded when, ten years later, he publishes a sequel to the work of 1605, called Part II.

How shall we sum up the qualities of so great a book? In despair of succeeding in the attempt, I shall have recourse to the simple, unvarnished record of its effect on the mind of one of the most clear-visioned of American men of letters, Mr. William Dean Howells, as recounted in his book of reminiscences entitled "My Literary Passions" (p. 26):—

"The reading of 'Don Quixote' went on throughout my boyhood, so that I cannot recall any distinctive period of it when I was not, more or less, reading that book. In a boy's way I knew it well when I was ten, and a few years ago, when I was fifty, I took it up in the admirable new version of Ormsby, and found it so full of myself and of my own irrevocable past that I did not find it very gay. But I made a great many discoveries in it; things I had not dreamt of were there, and must always have been there, and other things wore a new face, and made a new effect upon me. I had my doubts, my reserves, where once I had given it my whole heart with-

out question, and yet in what formed the greatness of the book it seemed to me greater than ever. I believe that its free and simple design, where event follows event without the fettering control of intrigue, but where all grows naturally out of character and conditions, is the supreme form of fiction; and I cannot help thinking that if we ever have a great American novel it must be built up on some such large and noble lines. As for the central figure, Don Quixote himself, in his dignity and generosity, his unselfish ideals, and his fearless devotion to them, he is always heroic and beautiful; and I was very glad in my latest look at his history that I had truly conceived of him at first and had felt the sublimity of his nature. I did not want to laugh at him so much, and I could not laugh at all any more at some of the things done to him. Once they seemed funny, but now only cruel, and even stupid, so that it was strange to realize his qualities and indignities as both flowing from the same mind. But in my mature experience, which threw a broader light on the fable, I was happy to keep my old love of an author who had been almost personally dear to me. . . . Cervantes made his race precious to me, and I am sure that it must have been he who fitted me to enjoy and understand the American author who now stayed me on Spanish ground and kept me happy in Spanish air — Washington Irving. . . .

"I read the 'Conquest of Granada' after I read 'Don Quixote,' and . . . I loved the historian so much because I had loved the novelist more. Of course I did not perceive then that Irving's charm came largely from Cervantes . . . but I dare say that this fact had insensibly a great deal to do with my liking. . . . I really cannot say now whether I loved the Moors or the Spaniards more. I fought on both sides; I would not have had the Spaniards beaten, and yet when the Moors lost I was vanquished with them; and when the poor young King Boabdil . . . heaved the Last Sigh of the Moor, as his eyes left the roofs of Granada forever, it was as much my grief as if it had burst from my own breast."

Listen also to another voice in praise of Cervantes' immortal work (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, "Spanish Literature," p. 232).

"Small wonder if the world received 'Don Quixote' with delight! There was nothing like it before; there has been nothing to eclipse

it since. It ends an epoch and begins another; it intones the dirge of the mediæval novel; it announces the arrival of the new generations, and it belongs to both the past and the coming ages. At the point where the paths diverge, 'Don Quixote' stands, dominating the entire landscape of fiction. Time has failed to wither its variety or to lessen its force, and posterity accepts it as a masterpiece of humoristic fancy, of complete observation, and unsurpassed invention. It ceases, in effect, to belong to Spain as a mere local possession, though nothing can deprive her of the glory of producing it. Cervantes ranks with Shakspeare and with Homer as a citizen of the world, a man of all times and countries, and 'Don Quixote,' with 'Hamlet' and the 'Iliad,' belongs to universal Literature, and is become an eternal pleasure of the mind for all nations."

Of one of the most vital and enduring forms of Literature, perhaps indeed the highest and most significant of all, no word has yet been spoken. I mean the Drama. In the latter half of the sixteenth century the theater was still in a rude and undeveloped condition in Spain. It remained for Cervantes' greatest contemporary and only real rival, Lope de Vega, to place the Spanish stage on a higher plane, and render it illustrious throughout the world. Lope de Vega was a genuine example of what is called "a youthful prodigy." At a moment when our own country is said to have produced, in a single university, no less than four youthful prodigies, it may be interesting to remind ourselves, by the notable case of Lope de Vega, that youthful prodigies occasionally redeem in their maturer years the precocious promises of their infancy. According to his friend Montalvan, Lope de Vega not only read Latin as well as Spanish at the age of five, but before he had learned how to write, was wont at school to share his breakfast with the older boys, in order to get them to take down for him the verses that he dictated. To some who have children of the unprodigious type it may be a comfort to be informed that Lope, as he himself tells us, at this interesting period of his career "avoided the mathematics, which he found unsuited

to his humor." His earliest surviving play, "El Verdadero Amante," written at the age of twelve, is to be found in the fourteenth volume of his dramatic works, and was actually put upon the stage. At the age of fifteen he was already a soldier in the wars, and later spent some time at the University of Alcalá, and was still later attached to the Duke of Alva, grandson of the remorseless Duke. In 1588 he served at sea in the Invincible Armada, where he found time to write his long poem entitled the "Hermosura de Angélica," purporting to be a continuation of Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso." But it is only of the dramatic output of Lope that there is time at present to speak, except, indeed, to mention his epic poem called the "Dragontea," the name and subject of which are taken from Sir Francis Drake, whose prominent share in the defeat of the Armada caused him to be chosen as the special object of Lope's bitter poetical attack.

Of Lope's place in the Literature of Spain it may be said that, as Shakspeare is the real founder of the English theater, so Lope is the founder of the Spanish; as Cervantes is the representative citizen of the world for Spain, Lope de Vega is the typical genius of the Spanish character. His productivity was enormous; his facility of invention and expression almost incredible; his intellectual endowment incomparable, leaving nothing unattempted: short tales, eclogues, epistles, sonnets, pastorals, the epic poem, the romantic novel. Of plays he is said to have written eighteen hundred. Hazlitt denies the tale of his having composed a play before breakfast, but it is believed to be a fact that on scores of occasions he finished an entire play within the twenty-four hours. Under such conditions an author cannot but suffer from the defects of his qualities. A writer by some accounted greater than Lope was to arise on the dramatic horizon. The generation that had for a time been carried away by Lope turned to the rising star of Calderón, the preëminent representative of Spanish literary genius in the seventeenth century. Though



he was not precocious like Lope, he was at least good-naturedly spoken of by the latter, when the youthful Calderón had carried off a prize, as one "who in his tender years earns the laurels which time is wont to produce only with hoary hairs." Alike successful with plays secular, religious, and philosophical, he was so indifferent to the fate of his secular pieces that it is almost by a fortunate chance that they have been identified and preserved to us. Of the formal plays the number is one hundred and twenty, of the one-act pieces, or "autos sacramentales," we may count something like seventy. Though the "autos" are now little read in Spain and almost not at all outside of it, it was the opinion of Shelley, and of various others since his day, that one of the strongest sides of his dramatic art is displayed in these little pieces, a form of composition peculiarly typical of the Spanish temperament, being intended to present symbolically the mystery of the Eucharist by representation in the open air at the festival of Corpus Christi. But after all it is by such philosophical plays as that entitled "*La Vida es Sueño*" that Calderón is known, and will continue to be known, as the stately, earnest, loyal, and imposing dramatist of the seventeenth-century Spanish stage.

The step is a long one from the times of Calderón to the living or recently living writers of the present day, but the necessity of taking it is imposed by the advancing hour. What has the Spain of to-day to offer to the student of contemporary European thought? For a long time French literary products in many fields have engrossed the attention of Spain's thinkers and readers, but there is one field in which for a good many years native work of the highest and most engaging quality has been put forth, to the entertainment and delight not only of the reading public of the Peninsula, but of the readers of all the modern nations. It is needless to say that I speak of the field of fiction, while the only two authors whom it will be possible to mention by name are

Juan Valera, late minister of the Spanish government to the United States, and Pérez Galdós, one of the most eminent writers of fiction in the world to-day.

It is surely not by mere chance that the finest work of each of these literary masters is occupied with problems that are fundamentally spiritual and religious, but this is certainly due to the fact that the heart of the Spaniard to-day is profoundly religious, as it has ever been in the past; while both Valera and Galdós are too closely in touch with the pulsation of the people's heart to fail to respond to every stirring of the popular emotion. I am fain to speak of Valera's "*Pepita Jiménez*" as if it were the work of yesterday, because time flies so fast that the readers of that most notable production must still count the enjoyment of it as one of their recent pleasures. This is the book of which Coventry Patmore wrote as an example of "that complete synthesis of gravity of matter and gaiety of manner which is the glittering crown of art, and which, out of Spanish Literature, is to be found only in Shakspeare, and even in him in a far less obvious degree." Of his "*El Comendador Mendoza*," it must suffice to say that it bears the mark of being a sublimated autobiography. Of Galdós likewise I shall mention only two preëminent works out of the great wealth of his productivity — his "*Dofia Perfecta*," and, though it is a play and not a novel, his "*Electra*," the keynote of both of which is, that liberty — political liberty, religious liberty — is the world's best, supremest gift.

On the subject of contemporary Spanish Literature, I shall venture to quote a few words from no less distinguished a representative of it than the Countess Pardo Bazan, in which she says: —

"The novel, alternating between the old naturalism and the neo-romantic spiritualism, has been losing vogue. Our most famous novelist, Pérez Galdós, after having sought a greater glory in writing for the stage, has left off publishing and has gone ardently into poli-

tics. His name is one of the four or five which are mentioned in the hypothetical case that a Spanish Republic should ever want a President. . . .

"From Dramatic Literature, Echegaray, honored with the Nobel prize, has never definitely retired. He had filled our stage like another Lope de Vega, for more than a quarter of a century, yet to-day his plays are not presented. . . . Last year there were presented in Spain more than a thousand theatrical pieces, flowers of a single day. The public, always the same, demands novelty. That being so, it cannot expect to have masterpieces."

In conclusion, it may be said that the predominating fact in the development of literary self-expression in Spain has been that, while Spanish Literature, like the English Literature, takes its root in French and Italian soil, it is supremely true that Spain has in all periods held firmly to her national individuality, to her devotion to high and noble ideals, to love of country, love of honor, love of truth, and love of the faith and religion for which in all ages her sons have unflinchingly fought and died.

## XIII

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

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WE are not here to praise English Literature or to recount its glories. Its greatness, its long unbroken history, its splendid names, are for you commonplaces; to you it means books that have been treasured and cherished, that have been the ever-renewing springs of your mirth and solace and invigoration. For you it is a friendship and an intimacy. But even for those who care little for Literature and who knock rarely at her doors, her influence is none the less intimate and abiding. Like our laws, our institutions, and our faiths, our Literature is a part of the heritage of English-speaking peoples. It has paralleled and reflected their development and partaken of their peculiarities. It represents the centuries behind us; it has had its part, and it still has, in all that we mean by national or racial progress; it is a social bond that unites the millions of to-day with the millions of yesterday or to-morrow; it still contributes and ministers to our beliefs and hopes; it reflects itself directly or indirectly in the daily thought and feeling of every one of us. We approach English Literature, therefore, not as an imposing collection of beautiful works of art, not as a museum of the achievements of genius, not as a Hall of Fame, nor even as an assembly of familiar and noble friends; but rather as the record and expression of English minds, as a living thing in whose growth and dominion we, as our forefathers, have a share. We ask what has been and what is its meaning for those of English birth or speech?

What is the endowment which it confers on the race of to-morrow?

These questions, at first thought, do not seem to indicate the way to a clear demarcation of a national literature. For Literature is older than the nations, or the races. It began with the dawn of culture, and it has continued its sway in many climes and tongues through the long advance of civilization. Its great masterpieces in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages have been the pillars of fire and cloud that have guided the peoples of Western Europe out of their bondage into a freedom where they have created literatures of their own. In modern times, through the ever-increasing intercommunication among these nations, Literature has become in no small measure the result of constant borrowing and exchanging. No great work in one language is without its influence on other nations; no national literature at any time stands by itself without large support from outside. The greatest writers are adopted by peoples not their own, and become essential parts of foreign traditions. The literary impulse now struggling in some future poet of the Sierras shall learn from *Æschylus* and *Vergil*, *Dante*, *Cervantes*, *Molière*, and *Goethe* before it ventures flight. In spite of her isolation from the Continent, England has shared, and usually followed, in all the movements of European culture, and her Literature has always been heavily indebted to those of other nations. These borrowings have been of all possible kinds, ranging from the adoption of a suggested idea to detailed copying of treatment and expression. Often such borrowing and lending back and forth have become complicated beyond the possibility of unraveling. The relation of English Literature to other national literatures is, in fact, fully as much one of complex and multiple resemblances as one of prevailing and essential differences.

Even if we could wave aside the resemblances and consider only the differences, our subject would yet retain a large

share of its difficulties; for the Literature of any generation is varied, complex, and contradictory. Its distinction from any other national literature of that time has been the resultant of innumerable causes, and is displayed in an enormous variety of effects. There can be no brief and satisfactory characterization of a literature so varied and extensive as that of the English people. To get anything like unity of effect we must needs go far back to a time when national life was simpler and authors fewer than now, to a time, in fact, of which very few records have been preserved and of which our knowledge is consequently scanty. "Beowulf" and a few fragments of Anglo-Saxon poetry present glimpses of the life of a pagan Germanic people, a primitive heroic age, far more fully and nobly described in the Old Norse Eddas. Later the Literature of the Angles and the Saxons becomes dominated by that of European Christendom, and then for a while after the Norman Conquest there is a submergence of vernacular Literature. When it reasserts itself, there is a new quickening from Celtic romance, but for many generations the spread of ideas and of literary forms characteristic of the Middle Ages is carried on in England mainly under French auspices. Not until the fourteenth century did English Literature attain national and individual greatness, notably in two men, Langland and Chaucer. The first, or whoever was the author of "Piers Plowman," was almost untouched by direct foreign influence; he was a democrat, a dreamer singing of social unrest and aspiration, hating things as they were, praying for better government, better opportunity for the individual worker, and a fairer system of society. Typically English, he spoke for the English people of his age. The second, Chaucer, was a man of the world, an artist and a scholar, who took all he could get from French, Italian, or Latin. He was observant, tolerant, and ironical, a humorist, and, in the broad sense of the word, a humanist, who studied men even more closely and lovingly than his worthy authors,

and for the same reason, because he cared above all to retell what he read or saw in a beautiful and enduring fashion. He did not picture what Langland saw, he was the opposite of Langland in almost every respect, yet surely his poetry is characteristically English. Whose is more so, Chaucer's or Langland's?

After this fashion we might come down from generation to generation, through the eras of the Transition, the Renaissance, of Neo-Classicism, and of Romanticism; we might examine changes in language, in government, in literary relations leading to the successive dominance of Latin, Italian, French, and German ideas and forms; and in spite of our extended analysis we should find it difficult to decide in each generation what movements, or even what authors, are most characteristically English. Let us take them in couples, pairing two writers who are important and representative, but diametrically opposed in many traits, and then ask which is the more characteristically English: Shakspeare or Bacon? Milton or Dryden? Pope or Defoe? Johnson or Cowper? Scott or Shelley? Or who represents most typically English Literature in the nineteenth century: Longfellow or Whitman? Cooper or Hawthorne? Browning or Tennyson? Carlyle or Newman? Emerson or Disraeli? Dickens's novels or Matthew Arnold's poems? Walter Pater or Mark Twain?

It is needless to go on multiplying the complexities of our subject. Enough has been said to indicate a few of the many complications which our discussion will seek to avoid, and to afford a glimpse of some extensive and interesting fields of study into which we shall not venture. Even if the relations of English to other literatures, and the different aspects of successive periods, and the various manifestations of any moment of our literary history, all be neglected, we may still seek for suggestions toward a summary of the characteristics which Literature has developed and the meaning which it has acquired from its particular national environment.

Let us return to our general inquiry and consider how the vital literary principle, which is ever transforming experience into song and story and sermon, has been preserved and nourished among the English people, and what for them has been the significance of this leaven of imagination and sympathy.

An analogy readily presents itself between the growth of Literature and the evolution of English political government. In their development of political institutions the English have been distinguished among nations by an impatience of authority, in whatever form of centralization it appeared, and by an insistence on the freedom of the individual person. While they have encouraged liberty to broaden slowly down from precedent to precedent, they have been distrustful of any violent break from the past or any sudden conversion under the persuasion of theory. They have preferred compromise to formula, the practical and the expedient to the theoretical and systematic. Hostile to system or codification, or centralization, clinging to government in small units, to provincial and parochial control, they have nevertheless built up a great system of political institutions, the wonderfully efficient machinery of an empire. Here has been at work the same national character which has expressed itself in Literature. As in politics, there has been no central authority, but a steady growth from national precedent and tradition, and a distrust of theory or system. In Literature as in politics there has been no control by a class, or caste, or profession, no control by one city, not even by London. Literature has been provincial, parochial, making its home in Edinburgh, or Boston, or Ayrshire. It has not been monopolized by the clergy, or the courtiers, or the lettered. Its doors have ever opened wider and wider, and tradesmen and peasants have won its greatest honors. Englishmen have insisted on all possible freedom for the individual in Literature as elsewhere, and out of the diversities and differences of this untrammelled



individualism, English Literature has attained its unity and its organic growth. Like the political constitution, so the English Literature has developed, not in response to any theory of what Literature is or ought to be, and not in response to any authority or criticism, but by closely adapting itself to the varying local life and thought of the people. If there has been any one guiding ideal, it is the same which has directed the creation of English political institutions, a faith in the rights of the individual.

Literature in modern times as contrasted with antiquity has undergone an enormous expansion. Its subjects and forms are more numerous, it reflects a more complex life, it appeals to a vaster and more variegated public. In this expansion the English people since the sixteenth century have played a leading part. Their great books have not been the outcome of a national attainment either of high artistic standards and taste, or of a thorough intelligence and culture. In neither of these respects has the nation ever for a moment equaled the achievement of the Athenian civilization, and its Literature has borne the marks of its deficiencies. Its great books have been the results of efforts to extend the scope of Literature and to influence a wider public. They have often been approved by the vulgar as quickly as by the cultured. Take the books that have most influenced foreign literatures, that have exercised a great sway over the world: the Elizabethan drama, including Shakspeare, the eighteenth-century novels, Scott's romances, Byron's poems. These were all daring departures from old forms, in an effort to make use of new experience, and they all aimed at the popular approval which they won. And many other authors, who might be cited as less representative of popular success, have been, like Browning and Wordsworth, equally intent on enlarging the boundaries of Literature and on leading the multitude into their new-found lands. We may return to our analogy. In Literature, as in politics, the English people

have been foremost among modern nations in expansion and democratization. They have built up both an individualistic democracy and a vast empire.

These achievements in Literature have not been unaccompanied by defects and deficiencies. Our energy and individuality have been noted by foreign critics, but they have charged us with many faults, to which they have sometimes applied a single phrase — lack of form.

In the first place, Form is often judged by classical standards. Formlessness becomes another word for a difference from the masterpieces of Greece and Rome, or rather from certain masterpieces. The great masters of simplicity, dignity, and sanity, — Homer, Sophocles, and Horace, — these are assumed to be the guides to perfection. They are the *ultima Thule*; you cannot go beyond them. And you cannot depart away from them; straight toward their beacon lies the path of literary greatness; on either side are the breakers of formlessness. While English writers have turned again and again to the classics for models and inspiration, they have not kept within this straight and narrow pathway. Without now questioning whether this is for better or worse, or how far other matters than form are involved, we must, I think, admit that there is no connotation of the word classical which will render it applicable to English Literature. Our individualistic expansion has, in fact, carried us farther than any other literature of modern Europe in divergence from classical guides and instruction. If lack of form means a departure from classical tutelage, it is a characteristic of English Literature.

In the second place, lack of form sometimes means lack of obedience to authority, or tradition, or social agreement. English Literature has never had an Academy, rarely even a school, hardly an established technic, never a ruling criticism. It has not obeyed the authority of the classics; it has not obeyed anybody. Critics have cried, as some still do, for academies, rules, dogmatism, authority; but Literature has

refused to be led by the nose. The leviathan has declined the hook. English Literature has in consequence lacked urbanity, regularity, moderation, the virtues that come from a general agreement or a yielding to authority. French prose, with its clarity and decorum, is an example of what social agreement can accomplish in literary form. English prose has too often exhibited the sins fathered by anarchy and dissent. Our great writers, those who survive and affect our lives, have violated almost every precept of literary law and order, and displayed eccentricity, bad taste, and even unintelligibility. No wonder our criticism has been mainly concerned in telling how much better they do things in France. Yet in spite of this independence of dictation, English Literature has often been imitative enough; it has clung to its precedents and traditions; it has been characteristically slow to change; but it has never relinquished its right to liberty. So soon as there has been any sign of a consensus of opinion as to what Literature is or should be, English Literature has then become something else. An unwillingness to accept any standards has been one salient characteristic of its growth.

In the third place, Form or Art may be viewed as something opposed to fact, to actuality, to life. Evidently there is need in Literature for both fact and fancy, actuality and art, truth and beauty; but there is a tendency to insist on Art as the essential. This tendency has usually resulted in limiting in some way the interpretation of life, in restricting the choice and treatment of subjects, in placing some refinement or abstraction of life as the goal of Literature. We have observed that English Literature has been hostile to all rules and restrictions. Further, to put the case boldly, it has been skeptical as to the possibility of making its imitation of life an Art. It has seen the incongruity, the precipitousness, the confusion, the eternal changeableness of life, and it has not readily believed that an imitation of these should observe any law or order.

We have had great artists, but they have rarely given a single-hearted devotion to their goddess. They have also worshipped some cause, some truth, or some fact. They have frankly tired of Art, as they knew her, and, like Dryden, voted to please themselves. Or, like Wordsworth, they have created an Art of their own, and then disregarded it. We have not produced artists as Sophocles and Horace, or as Racine and Flaubert were artists. English Literature has been suspicious of any guide imposed upon its explanation of experience; and it has come to no acceptance of any abstraction, refinement, or generalization of life, call it what you will: Beauty, or Nature, or Form, or Art, or Realism. It has been devoted to an extension of Art, but not to its refinement; to its popularization, but not to its perfection.

So much for what English Literature has lacked in art, or in certain kinds of art. But it must be remembered that Literature is the only one of the fine arts in which the English people have greatly excelled. It is the one kind of artistic effort which has greatly attracted them and in which they have originated and maintained a national tradition. As I have hinted, the deficiencies and failures that we have been noticing are the negative sides of positive accomplishments.

If English Literature has not been classical in form any more than in content, if it has not been distinguished by the virtues of simplicity, dignity, and sanity; it has nevertheless had its own trinity of graces, — variety, novelty, and abundance. Beauty for it has been something rich and strange, varied and startling. It has not loved moderation, but aspiration; not harmony, but picturesqueness; not sanity or even unity, but it has ransacked every clime and every creed for some form and expression for the two irreconcilable opposites, which it is the function of Literature to unite — the world of experience and the world of vision. If English Literature again has disdained authority, and has

lacked urbanity, and self-criticism, and deference to a social consensus, it has welcomed experiment and innovation and has triumphed through its individual variations. Take, for example, the matter of poetic style. Only for a few barren years in the eighteenth century has there been any general agreement as to the requisites of poetical diction; and that agreement rested on the absurdity that everything which Shakspeare had done was wrong. Well, the power and glory of Shakspeare's style lie in no inconsiderable measure in his unrestrained use of figures of speech. And how over-ingenious, far-fetched, mixed, and absurd they sometimes are! And yet how amazingly abundant and beautiful! How they create associations and resemblances, how they bind the world together in our minds, how they sally forth and capture new figures, how they translate the things of every day into faery land or the affair of a moment into the sweep of destiny! Theirs is a beauty which bows to no authority or decorum, it is the beauty of adventure and discovery, of motion and change, of the fast mail and the aeroplane. Again, if English Literature has not suffered itself to be abstracted from life and fact and moral values, it has, in its effort for an enlargement of its subject-matter, sought also for an accompanying variety and experimentation in expression. It has sought for forms that would reveal the fullness of life, for an art that would have power to affect men's conduct. And in nearly every kind and form of Literature there has been both high and varied achievement. In lyric poetry, for example, we have given new splendor to foreign forms like the ode, the elegy, and the sonnet, we have made the most of suggestions from our ballads and folk-songs, and we have created a new realm of melody and beauty in the poems of Shelley and Keats. Our Literature has indeed been extraordinarily fertile in its creation of new art-forms. I have mentioned the Shakspearean drama, the novels of Richardson and Fielding, the historical romances of Scott, and these are only the striking

successes of an art that has always been at its best in innovation and invention.

If the English people have not greatly excelled in music, painting, or sculpture, it is perhaps partly because these arts have seemed to them too abstracted from life, too impractical. At all events, they have tended to regard Literature as a practical art. They have not been much concerned with it as a profession, a technic, or an abstraction from life; but they have always been intensely interested in its substance, in its revelation and criticism of life and conduct, for that is what the substance of Literature has meant to them in the long run. Moral purpose (*i.e.* what seemed to the authors moral) has influenced nearly all of our writing, and the bearing of a book upon conduct has been a large part of its attraction for most readers. The Moral, indeed, has been too much with us. It has colored our metaphors and phrases, subdued our fancy, intruded where it did not belong, as into the "Faery Queen" and "Christabel," and too often led to didacticism and sermonizing. And its excess is the token of an essential trait. English Literature has never been able to escape moral values or to imagine a moral world separated from actuality. It has never been able to fancy itself in some superior sphere whence it could look down upon this mundane tangle with disinterested languor. Milton, the greatest of our artists, in the sense in which I have been using the word, chose for his subject "The Fall of Man," and all the theology attached thereto, because this seemed to him the most vital and moral subject conceivable. It was Puritanism which he sought to translate into sublime music. Two centuries later another English artist chose for his theme one which Milton rejected, because he saw an opportunity to sentimentalize and moralize the stories of King Arthur into a practical ethical commentary on the life of his own day. Keats is the only one of our great poets who saw the world unclouded by questions of conduct; and if he had lived a few

years longer he would have been a moralist. The very criticism of one age on another has usually been ethical. Dr. Johnson found Shakspeare insufficiently moral; and Coleridge found Dr. Johnson and his age sadly lacking in pure morality; and Coleridge has since come in for his full share of moral judgments. Classicism and Romanticism for us have meant moral principles and interpretations; our Battle of the Books is ever a struggle over conduct, a conflict of sweetness and light against the powers of darkness. And if Ethics has maintained a jealous guardianship over Art, she has also been a helping handmaid. It was when the Bible had come to be regarded as a sovereign guide in practical conduct that we made it our own as Literature. It remains the greatest monument of our prose and our most amazing display of sheer literary genius.

The English critic who has thought most closely over the questions which we are discussing, though he was prone to hold up French example to his countrymen and to insist on the unapproachable excellence of the classical models, was yet too thorough-going an Englishman to admit any interest in Literature higher than the interest in conduct. Matthew Arnold found the essential of Literature to be a moral criticism of life. And that probably comes as near as any other definition to expressing the meaning of English Literature to Englishmen.

This moral criticism of life has been more than an ethics, it has been a philosophy and a religion. The English people have not been system-makers any more than they have been sculptors or musicians. They have not devoted themselves to philosophy or to the fine arts with full-hearted allegiance. They have preferred a halfway ground, the bridge which Literature provides from the real to the abstract, from pure reason to experience. The powers which they have reserved from the fine arts and metaphysics seem to have sought refuge in Literature. There the individual has been left to

work out his own salvation. And though his search for an explanation and reconciliation of life may have reached no goal, whether in theory or religion, the history of his solitary struggle has often made itself into poetry. Our Literature has ever been seeking truth in her hiding-places and calling upon men to worship at strange shrines. It has found in the escapades of "Tom Jones" a system of ethics; in the landscape about Tintern Abbey the revelation of a deity

" Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns "

and from the wild stories of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear, it has made its symbols of eternal moral conflict and victory. It has been the lever which the individual has pressed against the immovable world in undaunted confidence that the world can be moved. It has refused to accept this life as fixed, static, adjudicated. It has viewed life as a struggle, a journey, a progress. It has ever been proclaiming new gospels and propaganda; constructing bridges across philosophical chasms, preparing new guides and new faiths. Futile enough these may seem in the retrospect, broken bridges, crumbling towers, and vanished faiths; but our way has led over these bridges, and has been lighted by these beacons, and summoned by these visions. The English race would be poorer indeed had not its Literature so constantly sought to advance from the confusion of fact to the assurance of faith.

Our insistence on conduct first and art second, our negligence in regard to standards and definitions, our unwillingness to accept direction or to come to a common agreement, our eagerness to crowd our vessels with precious freight before we have assured ourselves of their structural stability — all these national characteristics have unquestionably resulted in prodigious waste. Not merely the waste that must always come from mediocre and barren effort, but the waste of intellectual and imaginative greatness struggling without safe guidance; the waste that arises from refusal to



submit to discipline, to learn the result of past experiment and success, to control both ideas and form by reference to a common basis of social agreement, and to preface imaginative expression with intellectual culture. Much of our most splendid verse has lost its appeal because the poets dedicated themselves to ethical or theological propaganda, soon to be discarded as outworn or absurd. We need recall only Spenser's ethics, Milton's theology, Pope's deism, and Shelley's Godwinism. With the expansion of interests due to modern life, our Literature has wandered uncontrolled in many paths that lead nowhere, least of all to grandeur and permanence of achievement.

All this waste and expense of spirit is most manifest in the nineteenth century. Tennyson, devoting poetry to feeble compromises between old religion and a new society; Arnold, deserting the muse of his "Scholar Gypsy" to write "Saint Paul and Protestantism"; Browning persisting in eccentricity; Carlyle and Ruskin disdaining all discipline; Dickens prostituting his marvelous power of invention to the worst tastes of his public; George Eliot spoiling novels in order to make ethical treatises; George Meredith, distracting his superb genius in about all of these ways and some others; — surely, no other national literature in this period has brought to its service so much of intellectual and imaginative genius; and yet how comparatively little survives that is surely a thing of beauty for the ages. How much we seem to have needed a standard of perfection and an agreement as to the goals of literary endeavor.

But, as has been already hinted, this waste has its compensations, or even its justification. The very conditions of individualism and popularization which have been responsible for this confusion and uncertainty of effort have been the attractions that have summoned genius to Literature. Let us balance the account of waste and profit in an individual example, Lord Byron.

For two generations past, criticism has been indicating the faults of his poetry: its carelessness and even slovenliness in execution, its lack of profound thought, its departures from our accepted standards of morality. Clearly he cuts but a poor figure beside a painstaking artist like Horace or an artist and thinker like Goethe. Criticism has been inclined to pronounce him a bad man and a bad poet. But all Europe has read him, and surely English-speaking people will long continue to read him. Why? Because, in spite of some sentimentality and insincerity, his poems give a tremendous revelation of a man and his adversaries. For Byron was fighting alone against everybody, not only Bob Southey, and the blind, mad, old King, and Castlereagh and the Holy Alliance; but also against the shams, hypocrisies, artificialities, and tyrannies of European society, and against the religion, faith, and even the idealisms and philosophies of his day. He said no final word about anything, and very few wholly true words, but he wrote eloquent, powerful, and effective poetry, crowded with life and struggle and his personal vitality. Genius was in many ways wasting its efforts, yet creating a fresh, memorable, and irresistibly interesting criticism of life, and in that great satire "Don Juan" a new and amazing form of poetry. And Byron's case is typical rather than unique. English Literature has attracted great men who, having forced themselves into conflict with their environments, have found victory only when their individual struggles have led to imaginative expression — an expression that must have its trials and experiments, and succeed not by adherence to old models but only through the discovery of new. Is this not in some measure true of Marlowe, and Wordsworth, and Fielding, and Swift, and even of Milton?

Let us take another example, this time of a period and a class of popular Literature, the Elizabethan drama. There, in defiance of rules, models, and critics, Literature found its

shrines in a few crude playhouses that entertained a brutal and almost illiterate populace. Thither came young poets eager to create beautiful and sonorous phrases, but eager also to please the crowd and to record something of the excitement and action with which they knew, from both story and experience, that life was filled. A great number of plays resulted, very few of which are free from vulgarity, inconsistencies, bad taste, and sensationalism; hardly one of which is free from manifest and distressful faults that detract from the consummation of a consistent and unified purpose. Yet the conditions which made inevitable this extravagant expense of talent aroused the ambition of the supreme genius. Even without Shakspeare the product of those conditions is still splendid and appealing after these centuries. For its faults and its excellences are similar to his. Even his greatest plays are by no means as symmetrical or harmonious or dignified as those of Racine or Sophocles. And, on the other hand, the phrases that have so often been used to sum up the effect of Shakspeare upon the civilized world, and that have become almost dedicated to his memory, these phrases, had he never lived, would have found service in expressing our debt to those who prepared his way. For they too have renewed their power and charm through the years by means of their wealth of life, their revelation of man's motives, their idealization of his mirth and grief and passionate conflict; by their incidental wisdom, and their bursts of superbly beautiful and suggestive poetry. Out of the struggle and waste of their free individual efforts to please the public, there came a new Literature, a new kind of drama which wears the scars received in its endeavor to excite and horrify and amuse, but which in its great master has been for the English race a literature and a philosophy and almost a religion.

These examples suggest how completely the wastefulness of English Literature has been justified by its leaders

and its masterpieces. Still further, they bear witness that its encouragement of unrestrained, manifold and wasteful individual effort, and its uncritical and popular eagerness for new subjects and new forms, have triumphed in the wealth of experience that Literature has thereby brought under its transforming power. It has mirrored life from many ethical angles, refracted through many creeds and philosophies, and through many commanding personalities; but its great victory is the fullness of life which it has imitated, the vast and ever-widening range of experience which it has opened to our imagination and reflection.

Here surely is God's plenty, an abundance so varied that it baffles description and specification. We might dwell upon the observation, appreciation, and worship which our Literature has given to external nature. The world of mountain, forest, and cloud has been the source of our imagery, the key to our emotions, our very standard of beauty. But to dwell on the treatment of nature is to be reminded of that other world of cities and crowds, of Chaucer's pilgrims, Ben Jonson's gulls, Kipling's soldiers, and Mark Twain's river folk. The past century, which has meditated with Wordsworth at Tintern Abbey, has also feasted with Burns among the Jolly Beggars. Our Literature has indeed been loath to depart far from actuality. It has frequented the busy haunts of men; it has delighted in the incongruities and absurdities of their daily living; it has mingled its beggars and clowns with its kings and seers; it has faced the miseries and trivialities of existence. But if we are tempted to dwell on its realism, we are reminded of the romance which it has found in London streets and in the Heart of Midlothian, as well as in distant lands and past ages, and of the mysticism with which it has glorified hut and palace, sunset and the mind of man. It is useless to analyze. "The Essays of Elia," "Don Juan," "The Heart of Midlothian," and "Epipsychidion" were written within a few years of one another. Thackeray wrote

both "Vanity Fair," and "Henry Esmond." A new gospel of nature, a keen analysis of human motives, a comedy of follies, and an idealistic philosophy — all in richest measure — are to be found in the novels and poems of George Meredith. Falstaff, Ariel, Rosalind, and Lear inhabit one room in the imagination of each of us. Other literatures may perhaps have attained a finer art, or a greater surety and precision in their criticism of life than ours, but none has equaled it in the abundance, variety, and comprehensiveness of the life which it attempts to interpret.

There is, moreover, another achievement of English Literature which may justify its methods. As it has divided and scattered its efforts, as it has been unorganized, undirected, popular, journalistic, democratic, individual, it has had all the freer opportunity to know the shifting and complex trends of national life, and to awaken that life to the more immediate and imperious calls of reason, imagination, or spirit. No other national Literature, through a long period, in times both of intellectual advance and hesitation, of both emotional stir and quiescence, has so intimately concerned itself with national morals, and so constantly influenced the main currents of national activity. And this function of social service has been increasing in importance. In the Victorian era, which we have found so neglectful of literary standards, Literature has been of greater social and ethical stimulus than ever before. This era inherited the literary traditions of the preceding epoch of Wordsworth and Keats, but it also confronted great changes in ways of thinking, and the great change of the industrial revolution that created the new existence of factories, railways, huge industries, and crowded cities in which we still live. From this new existence our Literature could not hold aloof. It throbs with a new sympathy for those who toil unceasingly in poverty, and a new bewilderment upon the realization that the world which is changing so rapidly is still so full of misery and hope-

lessness. Without the industrial revolution, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, Newman, George Eliot, William Morris, Matthew Arnold, might have written greater Literature, or they might not have written at all. But, as the world went, the main impulse and the main characteristic of Victorian Literature became this great sense of pity for things as they are and of an imperious duty to make them better.

If in the future our Literature is even more unwilling than in the past to confine itself to the interpretation of a limited and accepted portion of experience into an enduring form, shall we not find a consolation and recompense in the promise that the continued multiplication and enlargement of its purposes will result in a more immediate, more lively, and more effective social service? Even in these United States, in our own day, when we are bemoaning the lack of dignity in our Art, is not this tradition of service becoming a most vital, a most fertile, a most promising fact? Is it not felt in our books, our plays, our magazines, our newspapers? May it not again prove the summons that will call genius to Literature?

Here, at all events, there is already instituted a new development of English Literature. Looking backward, it is natural to make American Literature a part of English Literature, as I have not hesitated to do in this lecture; but, looking forward, it is clear that the national division must continue, for wherever there is a real national life its expression must differ from that of its neighbors. The great stream of English Literature, though it continue to represent the same language, race, and traditions, must henceforth run in separate channels. It is no longer the Literature of one nation, but the Literature of the English nations and peoples. In America, however, we have not forgotten our ancestry. We brought Shakspeare and the English Bible to Virginia and Plymouth, and English Literature has continued the bulwark of our education. It is no small matter that we teach its

masterpieces in all our schools. Thereby we have made it the doorway of our institutions. Through it every alien child enters into the inheritance of our manners, our hopes, and our ideals. We are gathering other traditions, making new experiments, and beginning traditions of our own; but we shall not prove recreant to our great heritage. Our Literature, like that of the mother land, will remain free from any domination or limitation of criticism or caste. It will arrive at a united purpose, a national promise and ideal, but only through an entire freedom of individual initiative and experiment. It is already moral and social in its aims, intent to reflect the fullness of life, devoted to the democratization of art, and sustained by one trait which the older nations seem to be losing, an indomitable optimism. We have kindled our torch at the altars of English Literature, and we shall bear it far and wide as our experience broadens. In its light we shall examine men and their surroundings, and we shall declare, "Here is the world as we see it." And, in that spirit of reform, which we believe is the fountain of eternal youth, we shall add, "And here are ways to make the world better."

I have now examined some of the manifestations of the literary principle among the English people. In Athens that principle propagated among a genuine aristocracy distinguished by a highly developed culture, and it reflected a restricted tradition and a simplified and rationalized life. Since that time it has never found an environment so finely adapted to its perfect development. It has traveled far, and often has lodged in unfriendly places, but it has not lost its vitality. This spirit of Literature, which is created of sympathy and imagination, which is forever working to reflect, interpret, and transform experience, which must forever create and propagate so long as man's mind is not a clod, has now for thirteen centuries been thriving and multiplying among English people. Nowhere else, even among modern nations, has it been diffused more widely among the people;

nor has it elsewhere loaded itself with more burdensome duties. It has resulted in a Literature, neglectful of a basis of criticism, culture, or social agreement; a Literature, which, through the freedom it offered to individual expression, has attracted genius and constantly gathered to itself new subjects and new forms, and widened the range of ideas and emotions with which it deals. The main outlet for the nation's artistic aspirations, it has also laden itself with the duties of philosophy, religion, and practical ethics; but if it has lost thereby as a fine art, it has gained as an efficient servant of society and as a leavener of the national life. Art with us has been harnessed in service. Apollo has been in toil for Admetus. Heavy have been his burdens, strange his yoke-fellows, varied and ever multiplying have been his tasks. But if the god has been hidden, life has been illuminated.

"God, of whom music  
And song and blood are pure,  
The day was never darkened  
That had Thee here obscure!"

In a day like ours, when we are wont to turn to the bacteriologist for guidance and philosophy, the claims of Literature to preserve the nation's health and to direct her future, may seem less convincing than they did to Spenser, and Milton, and Wordsworth, and Browning, and Emerson. Or, if we survey other of the great achievements of the English people, their creation of free political institutions, their system of law, their building of this great democracy, their accomplishments in trade, invention, and science, we shall not be inclined to claim for Literature too great a part in the advance of our civilization. But let us render to Phœbus Apollo his due. In all this advance of the English people, the bright god has been a present helper. He has been the companion of her sons, and their labors have quickened to his music. In every generation Literature has presented much of the best



that has been known or thought, and it has united, as has no other endeavor, the imagination and the intellectual genius of this vast people. It has guarded the past, and handed down her glories and lessons to the present. It has been the voice of prophets descrying the future and calling men to her allurements. It has helped to make the idealisms of its visionaries the practices of their children. Who shall measure the boundaries or predict the conquests of its magnificent empire over the minds and hearts of mankind ?

## XIV

### FRENCH LITERATURE

BY ADOLPHE COHN, PROFESSOR OF THE ROMANCE  
LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

THE claim to distinction of a national literature may rest upon the highest degree of excellence in a special line or upon excellence of a high degree in a number of branches; and again it may lie in the presence in all sorts of productions of a quality which seems to be the special possession of that literature.

In regard to French Literature it may hardly be disputed that its special characteristics are, first, the variety of fields in which it has produced works of lasting value rather than the commanding eminence of a few monuments of literary genius. A French counterpart of the "Divina Commedia," or of "Faust," it would be idle to look for. But survey as you will the whole domain of Literature and it will be hard to discover in it any spot not marked by the production of some French work which has remained a portion of mankind's literary heritage. Poetry in all its forms, even the epic, witness the wonderful epic production of the Middle Ages; drama, romance, history, memoirs, letters, ethics, philosophy, science, — in short, whatever man may have to say to his fellow-man has been at some time expressed by some Frenchman in a form upon which it has seemed difficult if not impossible to improve.

Then, if, instead of surveying the outward appearance of the literary domain, we choose to look below the surface and

to discover what is the chief and most generally diffused quality present in the works of French writers, it is not difficult to find that the chief merits by which they are distinguished is the presence in them of a quality which may be called essentially national, viz. clearness. More than a century has elapsed since Rivarol wrote "that which is not clear is not French;" and few sayings have had the good fortune of being repeated oftener than this pronouncement of the most celebrated of the panegyrists of the French language.

But one who wishes to apprehend the real spirit of French Literature must not be satisfied with that altogether too easily made discovery of the quality of clearness as the most generally possessed by the works which it contains. He must go deeper and discover the cause of the phenomenon. Nor will this be a very difficult task. The clearness and lucidity of the French language is a natural consequence of the logical character of the French mind. Man invented language because he felt the need of communicating with his fellow-man. If he had lived alone, language would never have been created. If the desired result is to be reached, what we say has to be understood, and must therefore be, above all, clearly intelligible. Thence the first duty of the speaker is to express himself with clearness. A writer is a speaker; he does not write for himself, but for the benefit or enjoyment of others; he has something to say which he wishes them to understand. Literature is a conversation. Thus Descartes, in his "*Discours de la Méthode*": "I know that the reading of good books is like a conversation with the best people of bygone ages." And here the most modern and subjective of the great poets of France, Alfred de Musset, is found in full agreement with the seventeenth-century philosopher. When trying to give us his reasons for loving poetry above all things else, he tells us that he loved it because "it is intelligible to the world, though spoken by the poet alone."

This conception of language as a device, having for its object to make the intercourse between the various members of the human race easier, conditioned the French language not only in the formation of its grammatical and syntactical constructions, but even in the formation of its pronunciation. Language was not only to be understood, but also uttered with as little difficulty as possible. This does not mean that French is a language a correct pronunciation of which can be easily acquired by foreigners, whose ear and organs of speech have been fashioned by some other scheme of pronunciation, but that it does not require any strenuous physical effort. An accumulation of consonants without the interposition of any vowel does require some such effort; therefore such accumulations were banished from the language of France. A curious result followed, which acted upon the very essence of French poetry, viz. the creation of nasal syllables. Originally nasal syllables were created only when the nasal consonant, *n* or *m*, was followed by another consonant, the object in view being to reduce the number of consonants separating one vowel from another. The utterance of words was thereby made easier, but the idiom was deprived of one of the most musical elements of language. Take such words as the English *slumber*, the Italian *cantar*; such a line as this suggestive line of Heine's in German: *In Abendsonnenschein*; these examples will suffice to show what a price the French paid for the acquisition of an easily uttered and admirably lucid language.

The latent preoccupations which thus acted upon the modeling of the idiom itself, already explain one of the most striking facts that appear in a general survey of French Literature, the absence in it of the great preponderance of poetry over prose which may be noted in almost all the other literatures of Europe. But the effect of them was most marked in French poetry itself. With its musical element reduced to a minimum, and made for a group of human beings

bent upon understanding fully every word which was told them, it could not have for its object to lead through musical combinations of syllables to that part of the poet's thoughts or feelings which he preferred to leave untold, and to suggest instead of expressing it. This explains the failure of those poets of the last quarter of the nineteenth century who, like Emile Verhaeren and other men of undoubted talent, tried to make French poetry a musically suggestive poetry to conquer the ear of the general public. In France poetry has to be as clear as prose itself, and unable to be both musical and clear, these men sacrificed clearness to music and paid the penalty.

In French Literature the line that divides poetry from prose is less distinctly marked than it is elsewhere. While the poet is not absolved from the necessity of uttering his thoughts and feelings in absolutely clear language, neither is the prose writer excused from pleasing the ear as well as satisfying the mind. Language having been created for social intercourse, any one that uses it in harsh and repelling tones acts against its very purpose. Boileau's advice, "Shun the odious combination of unpleasant sounds," is surely meant for the writer of prose as well as for the poet.

This conversational character of Literature appears in the very form of a number of the masterpieces of French Literature, from Montaigne's "Essays" down; and even going farther back than Montaigne, as that in which the poet of the medieval "Chanson de Geste" always familiarly addressed his audience. Pascal is conversational to as high a degree as Montaigne. He is so, of course, in the "Provincial Letters," but no less in his "Pensées"; no mere communing with himself, but an ardent expostulation with an imaginary guest always present by his side, and whose soul seems in imminent peril of damnation.

In a language built upon such lines poetry will not look for the exceptional, or rather the extraordinary in man, but, on the contrary, will try to bring forward the traits that bind

all men together. Lamartine in his "Bonaparte," speaking of Napoleon, exclaims, "Rien d'humain ne battait sous son épaisse armure," and Hugo, who tried to bring the great warrior as near as possible to the great herd of mankind, wrote in his "Napoléon II" "Mais les cœurs de lions sont les vrais cœurs de pères: Il aimait son fils, ce vainqueur!" It was not Lamartine, but Hugo, who was here to be accepted by the people as the great Napoleonic poet. Least of all will be loved the poet who writes merely for himself. The genuine admiration and the strenuous exertions of all the great French critics have not been able to make Alfred de Vigny a poet dear to most of the readers of French verse. They will, in spite of his inferior art, turn to Béranger, and with his old sergeant repeat, for instance, a line summing up in a few words the tragic condition of France, when the return of the Bourbons had exiled the tricolor of the Revolution and reinstated the white flag of the old monarchy: "C'est un drapeau que je ne connais pas!" And while the regiment passes by, with drums beating, the old warrior remains motionless on his beat, lulling his grandchildren to sleep with tales of departed and forebodings of returning glory. Even in poetry, then, which usually contains the most subjective part of Literature, the French seem to enjoy, and therefore to produce, only what is common to all mankind. The saying of Montaigne, that "each man has in him an exemplar of the human conditions," might serve as a motto for the whole of their literary production.

Among all literary forms there is one in which man is presented more completely than in any other, viz. the drama. Elsewhere man has to be suggested by the writer and imagined by the reader. On the stage he is seen, almost touched. He moves and speaks. That a Literature which has for its object only this communication between man and man by which the speaker makes himself, his dispositions, his desires, his feelings, his needs, better understood by others, should

excel in this typical form of production is only what was to be expected. The most striking phenomenon in French Literature is the uninterrupted flow of its dramatic current from Corneille's "Cid" down to the present day. Compare this with the other great Literatures of the world. What is there in English Literature after Shakspeare, or in German before Lessing. What of commanding greatness in Spanish after the Golden Age of Lope and Calderón? In France note the fact first, that the appearance of the "Cid" is not an unexpected event. Corneille's drama does not, as was believed for a long time when the real history of the French drama was but very imperfectly known, come out suddenly from the utter darkness of ignorance. It is the result of the strivings of one generation and another after dramatic perfection. While the medieval mystery and miracle play slowly, very slowly, sinks into its grave, the modern forms, tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy, not less slowly come into shape, developing their more or less complicated structure from the mere embryo of Jodelle in the middle of the sixteenth to the perfected model of the following century. And from that time to the present day not one half-century has elapsed which has not enriched French dramatic Literature with some works of lasting value. The half-century which followed the production of the "Cid" (1636-1686) witnessed the production not only of the other masterpieces due to Corneille's genius, but also the whole of Molière's production and nearly the whole of Racine's. In the half-century following (1686-1736), appeared the last two plays of Racine, one of them, "Athalie," deserving to be considered the starting-point of the modern freer and spectacular drama, Le Sage's and Regnard's comedies, and the two most striking of Voltaire's tragedies, "Brutus" and "Zaïre." Between 1736 and 1786 we have, in addition to the rest of Voltaire's dramatic works, the comedies of Marivaux and Sedaine, and the two dazzling comedies of Beaumarchais, "The Barber of Seville," and

"Figaro's Wedding." It is towards the close of the next fifty years' period that the Romantic revolt tried to break the supremacy of the Classical School. Hugo's "Hernani" was produced in 1830, and had been preceded by the dramatic débuts of Alexandre Dumas, the elder; Casimir Delavigne, whose "Louis XI" used to be one of the favorite parts of that sterling English tragedian, Sir Henry Irving, belongs to the same generation. And then comes the age of Scribe and Sardou, of Emile Augier and Alexandre Dumas, the younger. The present uncompleted half-century does not seem more likely than the preceding ones to be considered barren of great dramatic works by the ages to come. It will suffice here to single out the production of Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac" in the last days of the year 1897. Without going into any detailed study of the French drama, for which time would now be lacking, we may here call attention to two or three points which will make it still clearer that the drama is the most original, the most rational part of French Literature. It is now universally acknowledged that Molière is the greatest dramatic genius ever produced by France. In fact, he and Shakspeare stand out as the two dramatic giants of modern nations. But in judging Molière and assigning him his rank in the galaxy of the world's dramatic poets, it should not be forgotten that Molière died before Time had allowed him to deliver in full his message to mankind. From his return to Paris, after his "Wanderjahre" through the provinces of France, to his death in February, 1673, hardly fifteen years elapsed. His average productivity during that period was two plays a year; how many of them, "The Miser," "Tartufe," "Don Juan," "The Misanthrope," "The Pedantic Women," masterpieces, the profound insight of which into the recesses of human nature time only serves more clearly to demonstrate; composed by him only in the intervals left free by his arduous labors as actor, theatrical manager, and court entertainer, they are a prodigious example



of human industry. At the close of the period his genius does not betray the slightest sign of enfeeblement, his last two plays, "The Pedantic Women" and the "Malade Imaginaire," being among his best. And then he dies, hardly fifty-one years old, carrying to his grave how many other unwritten masterpieces!

Now let us look at the Romantic drama. It blazed for a while and then went out. What remains of it to-day is simply Hugo's dramatic production. It begins with "Hernani" (1830); it closes with the "Burgraves" (1843). The more we study Hugo's dramas the more clearly we see that Hugo was not intended by nature for a dramatist. There would be nothing easier than to show how absurd, from a purely dramatic point of view, such works as "Hernani," "Marion Delorme," and the "King's Diversion" are; and the climax is reached in the lurid, but none the less majestic, "Burgraves." But everywhere the lyric splendor of Hugo's verse blinds us to the childishness of his dramatic construction. Nowhere more than in his dramas has Hugo demonstrated that he was essentially a lyric, perhaps also an epic, poet, but not a dramatist. Why then did he throw so much of his strength and vitality into dramatic form as to hold us spellbound, in spite of faults which would have brought ridicule upon any other writer? Because he had to. As the head of the Romantic School he had, under penalty of having the new school unanimously proclaimed inferior to the old, which had produced the masterpieces of Corneille and Racine, to demonstrate that the rebels, whom he led in their onslaughts against worn-out literary dogmas, were as able as their forerunners to win the laurels of the stage. So strongly embedded in the French mind was the conviction that the drama is the highest and most complete form of poetry!

And later, after Shakspeare's supremacy, so long disputed in France, had finally come to be acknowledged, it would have been for the French language a sign of inferiority had it been

found impossible to prepare for the French stage adequate renderings of the great English masterpieces. This naturalization of Shakspeare upon the French stage at last took place, not through the efforts of any one man, but by the labors of a legion of dramatists and poets, anxious to vie with each other in enriching the most dramatic Literature with the most powerful of all dramatic works. Paul Meurice, Jules Lacroix, Edmond Harancourt, Paul Delair, Auguste Dorchain, Louis Legrand, and others thus coöperated in a work which was intended to add to the dramatic Literature of their country what it needed in order to become the most complete, as it already was the most varied, of all dramatic Literatures.

But, striking as it is, this extraordinary vitality of the drama is not the most important phenomenon in the history of French Literature. It is merely an effect, more visible perhaps than any other, of a cause which pervades the whole intellectual life of the nation, and which has been alluded to above already, viz. the conviction that there is no essential difference between a speaker's and a writer's words; that, just as no one except a madman will speak only to himself, no one will write except with the object of communicating with readers. But to communicate what? This brings us to the question which has in some form or other to be examined in any literary inquiry: What is Literature? Does it consist of some specially literary forms, created purposely by the imaginative faculty of the human mind? Whatever theoretical answer may be given to the question, the French answer is clear enough. The literary or non-literary character of an utterance does not depend on its subject, but on its excellence. As soon as a thought has been couched in such language that those who hear or read it, and who consider it true, admit that they could not improve upon it, and that the best they can do when wishing to give it expression is to reproduce the words just addressed to them, this utterance becomes Literature.

Quite naturally the most engrossing thoughts will beget the most striking expression. This is what was meant by Boileau in his famous lines

"Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement,  
Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément."

This fact receives marvelous confirmation from even a most rapid survey of Voltaire's literary career. When, early in his life, François Marie Arouet put in his first bid as a candidate for literary fame, nothing was farther from his mind than the kind of activity which, in the last century, led John Morley to salute him as the author of "one of the cardinal liberations of the race." Corneille and Racine were held to be the greatest literary names of the century just closed. To rival, possibly to surpass them by a strict application of the rules laid down by their contemporary, Boileau, was then his sole ambition. And soon the success of his first tragedy, "Œdipe," and still more the universal applause that greeted the appearance of his epic poem, "La Henriade," gave fair promise of the realization of this dream. But he had not yet completed his thirty-second year when his enforced trip to England placed this pupil of the Jesuits and this subject of the absolute King of France, face to face with a state of things in which political and civil liberty, freedom of speech and religious freedom, in no way interfered with the sway of law and order, and rather fostered than hindered the growth of national power. That he should let his countrymen know what he had seen, and the thoughts to which contact with a freer atmosphere had given birth in his mind, was an inevitable consequence for this impetuous man, for whom by nature it was as impossible to keep for himself a particle of discovered truth as for the sun to hide one of his beneficent rays. The publication of the "Letters upon the English Nation," the first of his works devoted to the dissemination

of what came to be called Voltairean ideas, was followed by numberless other works upon politics, history, philosophy, science, social and legislative reforms, until his various utterances upon so many subjects constituted a whole arsenal at the service of all those who yearned for more light, more air, more truth, and more freedom. But how astonished the author of all these would have been had he been told that in those marvelously clear utterances lay the very foundations of his undying literary glory, and that the "Essay on Manners" or the "Treatise on Toleration" would long outlive such a tragedy as "Alzire" or even his great epic poem! And this simply because his message to mankind, though far from being absent from the works framed by him in obedience to the rules laid down by Boileau, does not ring there with the penetrating clearness which is recognized as soon as Voltaire addresses his contemporaries in his own name and in their interest, and not a theatrical or literary public, under the guise of imaginary characters, and under the trammels of an outworn esthetic legislation.

Strange to say, were we to couple any other name with Voltaire's, it would be that of Bossuet, the greatest divine given to France by the Catholic Church. In the saying that Voltaire was the Bossuet of the eighteenth and Bossuet the Voltaire of the seventeenth century, there is more truth than paradox. Like Voltaire, Bossuet delivered to his age the message which it needed and was ready to understand, and he delivered it with such convincing force as to remain to this day the truest exponent of the spirit of seventeenth-century France, and to be the one mere preacher of sermons whose works have become a part of mankind's literary treasure.

To express in each age with the greatest felicity and with unmistakable clearness the main preoccupations of the time, — such has been the mission of French Literature, and this mission has been so well discharged that he who has carefully

read the works of each period might almost dispense with any further study of its history.

All the turmoil and confusion, the clashes of unbridled individualism, the thirst after knowledge and the lust of the unchained beast that are typical of the sixteenth century, appear in Rabelais' gigantic literary puzzle; and side by side with it, in Ronsard, du Bellay, and their school, we find all the elegance and refinement of those Italian courts which taught France and all Europe how to hide, and perhaps ultimately to lessen, all the vulgarities of life under the purple and gold, the silk and velvet of the richest artistic mantle. And who can read even a few pages of Montaigne's immortal "Essays" without hearing, through the apparent skepticism of this most minute describer of human moods, an echo of the fierce religious wars which were then covering the whole of France, and such a large portion of Europe, with the smoke of burning villages and the remains of human martyrs.

In modern French Literature this identification of the history of each period with the activity of its literary interpreters becomes visible through the presence, in each of the last three centuries, of a writer of commanding greatness whose span of life covers almost the whole of the century, so that the seventeenth century might be known as the century of Corneille (1606-1684), the eighteenth as the century of Voltaire (1694-1778), and the nineteenth as the century of Victor Hugo (1802-1885).

Rarely indeed has Literature so completely revealed a nation's condition as was done in France during the first of these three centuries. The very multiplicity of great writers, three of them dramatists, points to a period of great splendor. The political absolutism of the king might be deduced from the fact that, from the works of so many writers of powerful intellect, political discussions are, we might say without exaggeration, totally absent. But not a single line

betrays any desire for a different state of things. The absolute sway of the sovereign is so fully accepted, nay, desired, by the nation, that, deprived of political power as it is, it feels as free as if provided with agencies for the manifestation and enforcement of its will. Listen only to one of its favorite poets,—listen to Racine. In his tragedy of “*Britannicus*” he introduces to us a character whom we may consider a type of the upright public servant, Burrhus, now minister, formerly private tutor to Nero. And when Burrhus explains to the Emperor’s mother, Agrippina, the principles by which he was guided while directing her son’s education, he states that his ambition was, that in the work of a triumphant reign,

“*Rome soit toujours libre et César tout-puissant.*”

Thus in one line of the poet we have made clear to us the mental attitude of a society that saw no contradiction between the omnipotence of the monarch and the freedom of the people. Political problems were, for such people, non-existent; and La Bruyère, at the end of the century, in his “*Characters*,” ridicules the busybodies who give themselves airs of infringing upon the province of the prince, and discussing matters which lie far beyond their sphere.

And yet seldom have problems relating to man’s conduct been discussed with greater frequency, profundity, and discrimination, — nay, fervor and passion, than by these writers of a stately age, when self-satisfied France believed for a while that she had reached the goal of perfect and permanent social and political arrangements. The whole nature of man, in all its manifestations, passes under the scrutinizing eye of Pascal and Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, Corneille and Racine. Even La Fontaine, in his “*Comédi à cent actes divers*,” as he calls his “*Fables*,” reveals to us a good deal of what we every day hide, not from our neighbor only, but from our own vision; and the whole seems to be summed up by Molière, in his sometimes somber and tragic comedy, which

reaches its climax when in his "Misanthrope" he reproduces before our eyes, with unsparing fidelity, the everlasting conflict between Society and Sincerity.

But in the succeeding age other thoughts engrossed the mind of the public. Outwardly indeed, Literature bore the same face. Poets still, and Voltaire at their head, wrote tragedies like Racine, odes, satires, epistles like Boileau, even epic poems that were held to equal, nay, to outdo, the "Æneid" and the "Iliad," but after the disasters and sufferings of the latter part of Louis XIV's reign, after the scandals and speculations of the Duke of Orleans' regency, the robust optimism of a Bossuet would have been entirely out of place, and it was but natural that the best minds of the age should no longer devote their strongest efforts to the discussion of problems entirely unconnected with what we are wont to call public affairs. Yet the time had not come when politics properly so called were to be in France anybody's business but the King's. And therefore politics and Literature are as completely apart from each other in the eighteenth as in the seventeenth century. What has collapsed is the theory which represented France under Louis XIV as the picture of the ideal condition for the whole of mankind. The voyage of man toward his ultimate goal is now known to be far from ended. It behooves him to inquire wherever he can for the best direction to follow. Revelation he has tried, and it seems to have failed. Science is young and has not yet been tried. Therefore he will turn to Science, or, using the language of the time, to Reason. Montesquieu, first of the great minds of the century, in his "Persian Letters," as a preliminary task, but for the fulfilment of which everything else was bound to failure, calls the attention of his contemporaries to their foolish custom of considering absurd all that does not agree with their own uses and practices. Then Voltaire's "English Letters" endeavor to demonstrate to them the wisdom of many things held by him to be done better out of France

than in it. Once started, the movement of scientific inquiry goes on without interruption. The great writings, the literary masterpieces of the age, are no longer tragedies, comedies, fables, sermons, works upon morals, but "The Spirit of Laws," — an attempt scientifically to present to mankind a view of all its legislative labors; the "Essay on Manners," aiming to be a philosophic presentation of universal history; Buffon's "Natural History," which brings Science properly so called within the domain of Literature; even Diderot and d'Alembert's bulky "Encyclopedia," born of the idea that it is man's right to have within his reach all that it is possible for him to know, that thus alone, by giving him a clear point whence to start, will he be able to perform the duty just discovered as imposed upon mankind and summed up in one word, — Progress. Even the stage is enlisted in this search after new and better things, and Beaumarchais' "Marriage of Figaro," performed, in spite of Louis XVI's not unreasonable misgivings, but five years before the beginning of the Revolution, sounds the knell of the old order of things.

The political revolution which broke out at the end of the eighteenth century was followed by a literary revolution. Politics then became a subject of general interest, and at once invaded Literature. The "Genius of Christianity" which was brought out by Chateaubriand in the earliest years of the nineteenth century, and which preceded by a few weeks only the signing of the concordat by General Bonaparte, then First Consul of the French Republic, was a work of political no less than literary significance. During the whole of the century politics and Literature appear almost inextricably mixed. Hardly one great literary name that has not its place in the political history of the period. And this is true of the women, of Madame de Staël and George Sand, not less than of the men; of the poets, not less than of the historians and philosophers. Chateaubriand gloried in having given Louis XVIII more than an army by the publication of his pamphlet on



"Buonaparte and the Bourbons." Lamartine sits as a member in the legislative halls of the reign of Louis Philippe, and as President in the Provisional Government of the Second Republic. The works of Victor Hugo, begun with a collection of royalist and catholic Odes, and crowned by "*Les Châtiments*," an impassioned arraignment of the Second Empire of Napoleon III, as well as an eloquent defense of republican and democratic ideas, might serve as a running commentary upon the whole series of political developments in France and Europe, from the time of his entrance into literary life almost to the day of his death in May, 1885. Guizot, the historian, is Prime Minister from 1840 to 1848; Thiers, President of the Third Republic; Cousin, Villemain, Tocqueville, Duruy, are cabinet Ministers. Even those who occupy no political positions, like Michelet and Quinet, never write a line that is wholly free from political preoccupations. Others, who are primarily politicians, see what can be achieved for their cause by literary eminence, and Louis Blanc absorbs himself in the preparation of a masterly introduction to his one-sided history of the French Revolution.

Sainte-Beuve, Renan, are certainly not political names; yet Sainte-Beuve wrote political leaders for the republican newspaper, *Le National*, and later accepted a seat in the Imperial Senate of Napoleon III; and Renan at least twice tried to have himself elected a representative of the people. Were it not that he felt out of sorts with the trend of contemporary politics, Taine would never have written his "*Origin of Contemporary France*."

Literature is enriched, too, by the appearance of two kinds of productions hitherto unknown in France, — parliamentary speeches and newspaper articles, both owing their birth to the newly created political life of the French people. In short, take out of the literary production of the nineteenth century in France everything that owes its meaning, partly or totally, to the political developments of the time, and what

will be left will seem a very poor show for such a tremendously active period of history.

Something would be left, though, and well worth reading. Politics predominate because they are the newly introduced element in the life and preoccupation of the nation. But Literature now aims to present a complete picture of society; witness Balzac's stupendous production, which he gathers under this extraordinarily ambitious title "The Human Comedy"; witness also the bewildering variety of subjects treated by the great master of literary criticism, Sainte-Beuve. For criticism now speaks in its own name and does not feel compelled, as it did in Boileau's time, to hide under the cloak of prosaic verse.

Thus in these three centuries of continuous literary greatness, Literature in France goes on constantly broadening; from the purely speculative study of man's moral nature in the seventeenth century, through the search after the conditions necessary to social progress in the eighteenth, it reaches in the nineteenth the height from which it can survey the whole domain of human activity, rejoicing in all its glories, lashing all its vices, weeping over all its miseries, and bidding Science discover a cure for all the evils but for the fight against which life would not be worth living.



## XV

### GERMAN LITERATURE

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LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

IN pursuance of the plan of these lectures it falls to me to set forth, as well as I can in a short hour, the distinctive character and value of the German contribution to the world's literature. The task is at once grateful and difficult. It is grateful because there are parts of German Literature which I have found very profitable for study, and one likes to talk of that which one loves. To-night, however, I cannot merely conduct you to my own favorite nooks and vistas in the forest, but I must try to give some account of the forest as a whole. And there comes in the difficulty. For German Literature is a very different thing at different epochs, and even within the epochs there is much diversity for which it is hard to find a unifying formula. But, for better or worse, the order of the day is broad generalization about a vast and complicated subject that has a long history. In such case the motto must be: Cautious, very cautious, but not too cautious. Let us do the best we can, endeavoring to look at the subject in a large way, but without ever forgetting the inherent deceitfulness of the general phrase.

Some years ago an eminent French critic, M. Brunetière, being in pursuit of very general truth, as we are now, committed himself to the proposition that German Literature is philosophic. The literature of France, he said, is social; that of England individualistic; that of Italy artistic; that

of Spain chevalresque, and that of Germany philosophic. Now that sounds rather seductive. It is so convenient to have all those great literatures thus neatly labeled with an adjective so easy to remember. But is German Literature, taken as a whole, really philosophic? Where is the "philosophy" in the "Nibelung Lay," in the songs of Walther von der Vogelweide, in the poems of the Dietrich-saga? Is "philosophic" the word that lights up the distinctive character of the old folksongs, of Luther's Bible, of Hans Sachs, of "Simplicissimus," of the poems of Günther, the odes of Klopstock, of the "Sufferings of Young Werther"? Is it the right word for Wieland's "Oberon," for the classic drama of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller, for the work of the famous nineteenth-century lyrists, for the plays of Kleist, Grillparzer, Hebbel, and Hauptmann? The question answers itself. And yet, those which I have named are not out-of-the-way things; they are some of the important, the characteristic things, of German Literature from age to age.

There is, indeed, a body of far-famed German philosophy — the work of resolute and lonely thinkers who wrote for their own kind — which to some extent has influenced "Literature" in our conventional sense of the word. But this influence is of comparatively recent origin, and is apt to be exaggerated; on the whole it is rather insignificant. Taken by itself, however, the work of Kant and Fichte and Hegel is an outgrowth of the specialization of modern thought. Like the writings of the great theologians, historians, naturalists, it flows apart from the general Literary current. It is not what we mean by German Literature, any more than Berkeley and Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer are what we mean by English Literature.

Of course there is a sense in which works of real Literature, for example, "Faust," "Wilhelm Meister," "Nathan the Wise," may be called philosophic; the sense, namely, that they embody criticism of life. But in that sense all vital Literature

is philosophic. The difference between "Faust," say, and a play of Corneille, is not expressed by calling the one philosophic and the other social. Both are philosophic, both social. Each mirrors a creative mind that was a child of its epoch and was interested in certain spiritual values. Each reacts in its own way on the soul of the reader or the spectator, and this soul which is affected includes the social feelings. If Goethe is harder to understand than Corneille, it is not because of his abstruseness, but because there is more of him. He deals with a far wider range of human experience. What is needed for the enjoyment of "Faust" is not a course of reading in philosophy, but knowledge of life in its concrete variety, its rush, and its pressure. And the same is substantially true of every German literary production that has proved to have any real vitality in it, apart from the exigencies of the scholar-class, who must of course have their *Stoff* for the laboratory. To say that German Literature is philosophic, and stop there, is too much like saying that the population of Boston is red-headed. To be sure, even that dictum has its use in that it sets you thinking; thinking, namely, how many Bostonians you have known who are not red-headed.

Of the larger factors that go to make a nation's literature what it is, the two most important are language and ethnic character. It would seem, therefore, that any attempt to describe the essential qualities of German Literature should begin with an account of the German language and the German people. The genius of a nation's language, said Herder, is the genius of its Literature. But, unfortunately for the present purpose, the genius of a language is something that cannot be effectively described in a few words. One would be compelled to attack the problem by means of detailed philological analysis and comparison, such as would be out of place on this occasion. So far as poetry is concerned, the genius of German is not very different from that of English. Both languages are sprung from a common stock, and both

retain much of the ancient inheritance. Both have borrowed largely from the Latin and the French. Both have a stress accent, differing from the pitch-accent of the Greeks and Romans, and usually falling, in native words, on the root syllable. The chief difference is that English has lost more than German of the old unaccented endings. For practical purposes this loss may be set down as gain, but for the purposes of poetry its effect has been to restrict the choice of feminine rhymes, and thus to lessen the range of those rhythmic and melodic effects which depend on them. The English poet has, I think, a more powerful instrument, but the German a more delicate and flexible. Nothing is impossible to the good craftsman in German verse. Not without reason do the Germans boast that their translations of the world's great poetry are on the whole better than those of any other people. It has been well said that every good French translation is at the same time an explanation. The good German translation — remember that I am now speaking of poetry — is an echo. Let me give just a single illustration, one that was used long ago by Bayard Taylor, to show how the German language can adapt itself to an English verse-melody. It is a well-known stanza of Tennyson, with a translation by Strodtmann, who, by the way, has no fame as a poet.

“The splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story;  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.”

“Es fällt der Strahl auf Burg und Tal  
Und schneeige Gipfel reich an Sagen;  
Viel Lichter wehn auf blauen Seen,  
Bergab die Wasserstürze jagen.  
Blas, Hühthorn, blas, im Widerhall erschallend,  
Blas, Horn, antwortet Echos, hallend, hallend, hallend.”

I quote these lines merely for the purpose stated, namely, to illustrate the metrical flexibility of the German language. Unquestionably much of Tennyson's vividness and lyric intensity is lost in the German version. We miss the "long" light that "shakes," and get something less good in its place. In *Bergab die Wasserstürze jagen*, the "glory" of the original is gone. In *hallend, hallend, hallend*, the echoes do not "die" as they should. All this, however, is merely saying that poetry, in its more intimate nature, is hardly translatable.

When we come to prose, the genius of German is less like that of English. Modern German has developed an elaborate periodic structure, with rigid rules of word-order in subordinate clauses and a tendency to make the sentence very complex. I seem to observe in recent writers a conscious reaction against that sort of thing, but it does not yet amount to a revolution. Thus it has come about that, while German verse is more flexible than English, German prose is less flexible, less expeditious, more intricate. To the uninitiated those Gothic cathedrals of syntax become mere jungles in which it is easy to get lost. And in the hands of a careless writer they really are jungles. It is said that a Frenchman cannot write his mother-tongue in an altogether slovenly manner if he tries. But a German can do it without trying. I would not seem to imply, however, that Germans are less sensitive than other folk to the rhythm of good prose. In the best masters, in Goethe and Schiller, in Heine and Keller, the rhythm is always there; but it is apt to be complicated, and it requires for its appreciation an ear that is sensitive to the German cadence of words and phrases. I am persuaded that the recent vogue of Nietzsche is no more due to his doctrine than to the marvelous rhythm of his style. At his best he is a great prose poet. The madness of the intellect was paired in him with a superb gift for the orchestration of words.

As for the ethnic character that is reflected in German Liter-



ature, I hardly venture to speak of that at all. What can one say that is broadly true of the whole German people, from Karl the Great to Bismarck, and from the Alps to the Northern Seas, and yet is not true of any other people? What, indeed, except that they speak the German language? A few centuries ago the German stock appears identical with the English. Go a little farther back, and it fuses more or less with the Roman, the Slavic, the Celtic, and the other stocks that philologists call "Aryan." This whole subject of the relation of linguistic to ethnic kinship is in a rather hazy condition, a free field for speculation by three classes of investigators: those who study language, those who study skulls, facial angles, hair, and complexion, and those who study tools and ornaments. Where much is so uncertain a mere literary scholar should express himself with caution. I merely say, therefore, that it seems to me that the differences we observe in the great nationalities of modern Europe are due more to environment and tradition than to anything in their blood or physical conformation. In the lapse of ages they have all come under the influence of the same great ideas, and civilization tends to uniformity. Amid varying forms of life, all over the world, we see an astonishing similitude in the virtues of good men, and also in the ways of the transgressor, in the follies of vanity and idleness, in the ruinous effects of poverty, ignorance, and vice. I have lived much in Germany, I have had a multitude of German friends. But I do not undertake to tell you what the "average" German is like. He is no less elusive and phantasmal than the "average" Englishman, Frenchman, or American. Few subjects are more tempting to the ready generalizer than that of national character; but the summary statements always rest on limited observation, and are more or less colored by the prejudice, the mental habit, and the personal experience of the commentator. They are never objectively true when they deal with the invisible things of the spirit. You can write

the history of a great people, you can describe their forms of life; but when you attempt to depict their ethical character you inevitably depict your own.

"Das ist im Grund der Herren eigner Geist,  
In dem die *Völker* sich bespiegeln."

You can average a column of figures, but you can not average moral qualities. You can make a composite photograph of faces, but not of souls.

If now, in spite of what I have been saying, I still hazard one or two observations on the German character, you will understand that I do not claim for them any great importance or any absolute validity. They are the impressions of an individual, of a bookish man, of a lover. You can make your allowances.

The German at his best — Literature is a record of the best for the best — seems to me to be temperamentally a loyalist, intellectually a radical. In all the older books, the virtue that we hear most about is *Treue*, which we are obliged to translate by such borrowed words as *fidelity* and *devotion*. His ethical idealism is less strenuous than the Puritan's, not because he wishes to live lawlessly, but because he is more interested in the ultimate whys and wherefores. His proclivity has manifested itself historically in the form of an earnest devotion to, coupled with a patient and laborious scrutiny of, those great idealisms which, one after another, have ruled the life of Europe: Feudalism, the Catholic Church, Holy Scripture, classical learning, progress by enlightenment, Romanticism, science, the socialistic state. In all these matters, if the German has seldom been the pioneer, he has been the most patient and industrious of subsequent explorers and road-builders. If he has but rarely given the very best artistic expression to the form and pressure of an epoch, he has excelled in working out its intellectual basis and consequences. His temperament is not phlegmatic; certainly not

in Middle and South Germany; he is not, as is so often asserted, deficient in the sense of form. But his intellectual process is slow, circumspect, reverent of first principles.

The German's patriotism is rooted, like other men's, in ancient tribal instinct, but on the whole he has rationalized and humanized it rather more than other peoples. Having suffered more than others from war on his own soil, he is less subject to the illusion of military glory. *La gloire* loses half its electricity as *der Ruhm*. "My country right or wrong" is hardly a German motto; partly, perhaps, because "my country" has been on both sides of so many important questions. Like other nations, the Germans idealize their great fighters; this is human nature, and seems likely to remain so for a long time to come. But it is interesting to note what kind of fighters the nations idealize. I would not attach too much importance to legends of long ago, but it seems worth recalling at the present time that the chief German hero of an earlier day, the man who, more than any other, captivated the German imagination and held it for centuries, was slow to wrath, reluctant to fight, a lover of justice and fair play, a man gifted with a high sense of responsibility. Taunts that affected only his personal dignity and prowess Dietrich would bear with composure. But when the wanton aggression became too insolent, or when a beloved liegeman fell, to whom he was in honor and in duty bound, then at last the mighty Amelung would draw his sword, the flames would begin to stream from his nostrils, and, — well, it was then prudent to keep away from him.

There are two periods, more especially, at which the German genius has brought forth works that deserve to be considered in a bird's-eye view of the world's literary values. Let us call them, without trying to be very precise in the matter of dates, the Age of the "Nibelung Lay" and the Age of Goethe. Of these the second is immensely the more important for the modern man. If I speak mainly of that, and hardly at all

of what follows the Age of Goethe, it is not from any feeling that there would be little to say; it is because, in the general perspective, the classic era has the better claim to our precious time. There is, indeed, much in the more recent past that I should like to discuss, for one reason or another; but not very much that is at the same time distinctively German and highly significant for the world at large. At least, it seems so to me. With the lapse of time it becomes more and more difficult to disengage and evaluate the national element in the great modern literatures. The underlying substance is much the same everywhere. There is now a very free and rapid interchange of the ideas and emotions which constitute the raw material of Literature. The new thoughts growing out of the progress of science and invention; the conflict of the classes and the masses; the friction of church and science, or of religion and the secular spirit; the social problems that grow out of the modern industrial system; the position of women, marriage and divorce, the sexual instinct, with its ecstasies and its vagaries — these are a few of the matters about which men and women are writing all over the world. And the morning paper brings the literary news from everywhere. A book or a play which deeply stirs one capital is quickly known at all the others. Writers get hints from every direction and are cosmopolitan in spite of themselves. We read them just because they deal effectively with these universal passions and problems. For that which is avowedly provincial, or narrowly national, we really care very little, save as we find in it a more or less amusing foil to the life we actually lead. Under such conditions who can tell any longer what is national? The difference of savor which we feel in passing from an English to a French or German book is more a matter of language and of personality than of any national idiosyncrasy which is capable of exact definition.

Let us now take a long flight through the backward abyssm of time, glance for a moment at the poetry of the Middle

Ages, and then make our way back quickly to the eighteenth century.

Down to the middle of the twelfth century the Literature of Germany is mainly a Literature of appropriation: appropriation of the Christian religion, with its Bible stories, its legendary lore, and its spirit of other-worldliness; of that fabulous ancient history which we find everywhere in mediæval writings; of tales of fighting and adventure which had already been molded into poetic form in France. But the old indigenous German poetry had never died out. After the incoming of Christianity it was kept alive by illiterate gleemen whose work did not get written down, because the churchmen, who alone could write, looked on it with disfavor. In the latter part of the twelfth century, however, the art of writing began to be more generally practised by the knights, and then came a notable flowering of lyric and narrative poetry.

Let us pass by all that part of it which has any resemblance to the work of the Provençal and French poets. In so doing, to be sure, we shall be passing by the most winsome lyrist of mediæval Europe, a poet equally eminent for the perfection of his artistry and the rugged virility of his thought, and we shall also be passing by the profoundest interpreter of Arthurian and Grail romance. But the songs of Walther von der Vogelweide, while essentially original, as much so as the work of Chaucer, belong after all to a type that had first been developed in France. So also the work of Wolfram von Eschenbach and the other German romancers, while it contains much that is truly their own, follows the line of an imported fashion. This is not the case, however, with that ancient conglomerate tale of the fair maid of Burgundy, which a nameless Austrian poet, about the year 1200, put into the form which we know as the "Lay of the Nibelungs."

There is no time here for any comparison of the "Nibelung Lay" with the other famous folk-epics, such as the Homeric poems, the "Mahābhārata," the "Shānāma" or the "Chan-

son de Roland." Nor would the comparison boot much, if there were time for it, on account of the utter unlikeness of the things compared. Which is the most soul-stirring sight, the Jungfrau from Mürren, the Bay of Naples, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, or the view from Acro-Corinth? As a patriotic American I could cheerfully vote for the Grand Canyon, but the truth is, I prefer Acro-Corinth. To speak less cryptically, I think the "Iliad" peerless among the folk-epics. It yields a steadier and a more varied pleasure than any of the others. If Homer sometimes nods, the others take long naps, during which they are rather dull companions for the modern man, unless he be some kind of a specialist. This is certainly true of the "Nibelung Lay." On the other hand, in the capital quality of power, the quality which in sculpture we associate with the name of Michael Angelo, there are parts of the "Lay" which have hardly been surpassed anywhere. And however the poem as a whole may affect the esthetic sensibilities of the present day, it is a precious record of the old German spirit and of medieval German life. Unique, strong, boldly limned, and permeated with a dark fatalism, it takes the imagination captive, and its pictures of fierce passion and ruthless conduct haunt the memory with the vividness of reality.

Following the "Nibelung Lay" there is a considerable body of indigenous German minstrelsy which has its interest for the scholar, but cannot be allowed to detain us on the present occasion. And then came a long stretch of time during which the Germans made no very important contributions to Literature. Poetic genius of a high order failed to appear, and what got written in the German language was, for the most part, ignored by the rest of Europe. There are, indeed, a few books, notably Brant's "Ship of Fools" and the chap-book of Doctor Faust, which played a rôle on the international stage; but neither of these can justly be called a literary masterpiece. And then there is the majestic figure of Luther;

but Luther belongs to the history of religion, rather than to the history of what we call Literature. The Italian Renaissance, which wrought such marvels elsewhere, found Germany politically disintegrated, without an intellectual center, largely oblivious of its own past, and with no generally accepted literary language. It was necessary to begin anew, so to speak, and the new beginning was retarded by the fierce and all-absorbing contentions of the Protestant revolt. Of course, the continuity of history was not entirely broken; such a thing as that would be inconceivable. There is a body of Literature — I am thinking more especially of Hans Sachs — which continues old tradition and at the same time is not unaffected by the ideas of the Renaissance. But it is a homespun literature, without great thoughts, without imaginative sweep, without artistic distinction or exaltation of feeling. The Nürnberg shoemaker is a winsome poet in his way, and very interesting as a mirror of German life in the sixteenth century; but the reader of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Molière will not miss very much in ignoring him.

When at last, in the seventeenth century, the German soil was prepared for a race of scholar-poets who knew what had been going on elsewhere, were proud of their mother-tongue, and eager to give their country a place among the literary great powers, their ambition spent itself on reproduction. They exerted themselves to prove that they could do, in regular and dignified German verse, what the French, the Italians, and the Dutch had already done. But the Renaissance was by this time an old story; it had done its work, and Europe was ready for something new, something which Germany was not yet prepared to give. And yet, let us not think too meanly of that pseudo-classic period as one of unrelieved artificiality and imitation. There are some real poets there, with minor messages and melodious voices; and there is one prose-writer, Grimmelshausen, who is worth reading. But there are no really commanding literary personalities.

And now, how shall I describe the spirit of the new epoch which finally gave to Germany not only a place, but for a while the leading place, in the literary world?

The Italian Renaissance had conquered for Western Europe, not indeed for the plain people, but for the choicer spirits everywhere, the right to live. The instincts and passions of human nature, the love of beauty and of self-assertion, no longer seemed dangerous lures of the devil, beguiling the soul to eternal suffering. But the literary expression of this abounding life had everywhere fallen under the blight of an all too rigid formalism. There was a disposition to hark back; to lay too much stress on the rules of the ancients, and not enough on the eternal right of the human soul to self-expression. The Reformation had freed men, pretty generally, from the intellectual tyranny of the medieval Church, but had itself given rise, in many quarters, to a narrow and pugnacious bibliolatriy. The misunderstood and ignorantly worshiped word of Scripture was killing the vital spirit of religion. The philosophers had won a large measure of intellectual liberty; the active brain was no longer confronted by the awful peril of the burning fagot or the Spanish boot; but they were a little too much inclined to overlook all that part of human nature which underlies and antedates the reasoning faculty.

What use was to be made of all the liberties and knowledges that had been won? Was the *homo sapiens* to be, after all, but a free and joyous animal, with a respect for antiquity and a taste for art? Was his religious nature to be evermore shut up to a choice between the worship of a hierarchy and the worship of a book? Was there a necessary conflict between his intellect and his emotions, between his social obligation and his individual welfare?

We see that there was need of a new synthesis of all that had been gained, a synthesis that should take account of the whole of human nature and turn the thoughts of men from



the Past to the Future. I am one of those who hold that the eighteenth century, much as it has been derided by a certain class of writers, is on the whole the most important century in human history. The cleavage that was then effected between the votaries of authority and the votaries of progress — between the men who look inward and backward, and the men who look outward and forward — is the most momentous of historical events.

Now it is Germany's distinction that, just at the fullness of time, her soil brought forth a group of great writers whose work gives the first large and luminous answer to the questions I have formulated. Foremost among them stands the man of whom Emerson said that "the old Eternal Genius that built the world had confided itself more to him than to any other." Any of the group would have made any epoch memorable; that this epoch has become supremely memorable is due to the radiant genius of Goethe.

In Literature, if not in the domain of physical magnitude, the whole may be greater than the sum of the parts. One who takes up the various writings of Goethe and compares them, one after the other, with the very best that has ever been done in their several kinds, will find nowhere, perhaps, an absolute maximum of achievement. Let "Faust" be excepted, for "Faust" is incommensurable; there is nothing else like it anywhere. But take "Götz von Berlichingen": surely it is a splendid manifesto of youthful genius, vigorous, captivating, "rammed with life." So too, "Iphigenia" and "Tasso" are exquisite dramas of the soul. But in respect of dramatic power and universality of appeal these plays must hide their diminished heads in the presence of Shakspeare. Again, "Werther" is a better sentimental novel than any one else wrote in the sentimental age, but it is a study in mental morbidity. "Wilhelm Meister" is surcharged with wise observation, but lacking in artistic finality.

And so one might traverse the remainder of Goethe's work,

his lighter plays and tales, his narrative poems, his scientific writings, his critical papers, his biographies, including "Dichtung und Wahrheit," and find everywhere profound thought and literary distinction, but nowhere, perhaps, that which bears the indisputable mark of a supreme excellence. What, then, is the secret of his power over those who know? Of the perennial fascination that invests his life and work? It is to be sought in the totality of his career; in the marvelously instructive evolution of his many-sided nature from youth to age; in the way he "beat his music out" under the impact of experience from year to year; in his loyalty to the Genius of Life, and his splendid endeavor to envisage the world ever more broadly and more sanely.

Taken thus in his entirety, Goethe stands for a larger and deeper synthesis of life than the world had previously known. Little by little he gathered up into the crucible of his mind all the great values which the past had contributed to the upbuilding and enrichment of the human soul, and fused them into a new spiritual treasure. His childhood was nourished on the Bible, and his youth was deeply stirred by the mystic appeal of the Christian faith. Then came, in the prime of his manhood, the glory that was Greece, with all that Hellenism implies for the modern man; the Italian Renaissance, with its passion for ideal and sensuous beauty; science, with its endless vistas of heights to be won by laborious investigation; the idea of evolution, dimly glimpsed, it is true, and lacking the definite proofs that Darwin was to furnish, but clear enough to reveal to him its tremendous import, and to become henceforth the pivot of all his thinking. Add to all this the strenuous discipline of long public service during one of the most pregnant epochs in human history. What other writer of books ever lived so much as did Goethe?

It might seem, perhaps, as if all those multifarious distractions must have thwarted the vocation of the poet. And so it was, no doubt, to some extent. There are periods in which

the reader of Goethe's diary and letters may get an almost painful impression of magnificent strength frittered away on futilities. But while we indulge in that melancholy reflection, let us at any rate not forget the countervailing gain. The immense prestige of Goethe as a critic of life rests on his broad and intimate knowledge of the subject. To call him, as Herman Grimm did, the greatest poet of all times and of all nations, seems to me, as it seemed to Matthew Arnold, a patriotic hyperbole. But to call him the wisest of poets is sober truth. That which has endeared him to scientific men — for he is preëminently their poet — is not the work he did in half a dozen lines of investigation, but the general sanity of his mind. The poetic frenzy tends usually to passionate overstatement, involving some sacrifice of truth. England has lately lost a wonderful master of verbal witcheries, and we love to quote him for the scintillant beauty of his phrase. But what strange opinions Swinburne sometimes expressed! Not thus with the great German. If you find it in Goethe, it is so.

Do I seem to be saying that the greatness of Goethe was that of a sage rather than a poet? I would not be understood exactly in that way. To be sure, it does not grieve me, as an individual *Goethefreund*, to hear him classed with the sages; for I hold that "wise man" is on the whole a more august title than "poet." Not the impassioned dreamer; not the prophet, the orator, the artist, the warrior, the statesman, or the empire-builder, but the wise man, is thus far the noblest product of evolution on this planet. Still, I know that many would take issue with me on that point. Considering the fallibility of man's wisdom at its best, they would assign the highest place in the hierarchy of spirits to the "poet," who voices his vital experience in rhythmic words of supreme fitness and imperishable power. I believe I understand that point of view. Let us not forget, however, that Poetry, in a large historical survey of the subject, is a thing of

Protean aspect, which has always resisted exact definition. Our English usage makes much of the metrical factor, the "poet" being first of all a maker of verse. On the other hand, the German *dichten* hardly connotes meter at all, but lays chief stress on the element of imaginative creation.

Now if the poet, in the essence of his being, is an imaginative creator, and if what he creates has great importance for the understanding and the conduct of life, then he becomes a "sage"; differing, however, from other sages, from the mere *savant*, man of science, or philosopher, by precisely that element of imaginative warmth, without which the wisdom of the wise rarely goes home to the deep places of human nature. In such case his wisdom, instead of being a reproach to his poetry, is the perfect flowering of it.

Such, in effect, was Goethe's conception of the poet's calling, as we find it in those famous lines of the Prelude to "Faust":—

"Wodurch bewegt er alle Herzen?  
Wodurch besiegt er jedes Element?  
Ist es der Einklang nicht, der aus dem Busen dringt,  
Und in sein Herz die Welt zurücke schlingt?"

The passage goes on to say that the poet is he who gathers up into his soul the facts of life, in their tiresome monotony and their jangling discord, and gives them back in the form of a symphony, —

"Wo es in herrlichen Accorden schlägt."

Put in somewhat different words, this means that the poet's function is to reconcile us to the Power that made and makes the world; to keep us on a friendly footing with the Genius of Life, by permitting us to see through the phenomenal veil of discord and ugliness to the essential harmony, the everlasting goodness.

I would by no means assert that Goethe was always true to this ideal, or that everything he wrote was inspired by it. Like other men, he was the child of his epoch and of his circumstances. He had his limitations, and he made his mistakes. Were this not so, we should hardly care for him as we do; for, as he himself said, it is a man's mistakes that make him lovable. No more than other men was he always up to his own highest level. He had his private battle to wage with the goblins of pessimism, with the *misère* of trivial existence. Much that he wrote, in the course of his long life, was tentative, uninspired, of transitory interest. But take him all in all, his writings do illustrate and accord with the doctrine that I have tried, in my imperfect way, to describe. It forms the heart of "Faust"; "Wilhelm Meister" is saturated with it; it sings in many a lyric. It informs that "calm, free, and onward" spirit which lends such an imperishable interest to the afternoon and evening of his life.

I have left little time for the other great writers of the classic era; for Lessing, the superb critic, for Herder, the inspired pathfinder, or for Schiller, the beloved idealist. None of these men measures up to the stature of Goethe as a world-author, but each did a work of such far-reaching importance in modern life that one may well shrink from the attempt to describe it in a few words. Only a hint or two can be given. So far as I know, Lessing was the first great critic to write of religion in a spirit at once fearless, reverent, scholarly, and broadly human, that is, free from all ecclesiastic bias. In "Nathan the Wise" his critical gift rose to the height of creative genius. It is the most pregnant and irresistible of all modern dramas having a specifically religious import. Fresh and real to-day as when it was first published, that eloquent plea for tolerance, practical goodness, and human brotherhood, is a very precious world-classic.

And what a world of fruitful ideas first took shape in the teeming mind of Herder! He was the real father of the

"historical method." It was he, and not a nineteenth-century Frenchman, who first clearly enunciated the doctrine of the "race, the epoch, and the surroundings." He was a pioneer in the due appreciation of primitive culture and of the poetry of unlettered men. The whole Romantic School is prefigured in his writings. He opened new vistas in the understanding of the Hebrew Bible, and he first developed the great thought that the goal of the historic process is the training of man for humanity. There is a spot in the Black Forest where the rain which falls at a certain point goes into the Danube and the Black Sea; but if it falls a few feet away, it goes into the Rhine and the German Ocean. Standing at this apex, the traveler may well have the sensation of being at the source of great things. Some such feeling I used to have at Weimar, as I wandered among the places where Herder lived and wrought, or paused in my walk to look at his statue, with its noble inscription, "Light, Love, Life."

But with all his opulence of ideas, Herder was an indifferent artist, whether in verse or prose; wherefore it is well for us, if not so well for his own fame, that what he had to say was in the main better said by his two illustrious friends. It is the prime distinction of Schiller to have made himself beloved in a peculiar degree as a poetic idealist. Freedom, Truth, Beauty, are invested in his glowing and sonorous lines with a high and alluring significance. The temper of our time and country is rather cool toward such abstractions. We look on them somewhat as we look on the white and filmy clouds that float high in the June sky, as bright and beautiful, but unsubstantial and not well suited for human nature's daily food. We go in for specific practical betterment, and we are a little suspicious of vague dreams and the rapt dreamer. Nevertheless we perceive, in our moments of insight, that these more or less ethereal ideals, and our willingness to work for them, are what gives dignity to life and lifts us above the brutes that perish. Without our dreams, our faiths, our

ideal objects of devotion and aspiration, we are but featherless bipeds who have somehow learned to talk and to make tools. The improvement of our tools, our food, our clothes, and housing, may be worth attending to, — it is worth attending to, — but chiefly as a means of releasing our energies for that spiritual betterment, the hope of which is the best part of our human heritage and the noblest incentive of the modern man.

Now this was clearly seen and deeply felt by Schiller, who expressed it not only in philosophic writings which are caviare to the general, but also in poems and plays which have become household lore for the German people. By the high seriousness of his life and his unwavering fealty to the unseen things which are eternal, he accredited his message for all who know him. This is why we love him. This is why his name has become a name to conjure with in every part of the world where Germans are gathered together.

## XVI

### RUSSIAN LITERATURE

BY J. A. JOFFE, LECTURER IN RUSSIAN

IN the Pantheon of Literature the writers of Russia have been accorded, within the last thirty years, a niche by the side of the supreme heaven-dwellers of that temple. The phenomenon is all the more remarkable when one remembers that it is practically within this brief period, about a generation and a half, roughly speaking, that the outside nations have made the acquaintance of Russian Literature.

The hold it laid upon the non-Russian reading public was instantaneous, firm, and persistent. Foreign observers of literary phenomena were amazed at its sudden sweep and force. One of its greatest admirers (Ferdinand Brunetière) records that for a time matters threatened to reach a point when the well-known yellow-covered volume in the hands of a Frenchman could be almost safely assumed to be the work of one of the chief Russian novelists, — such was the vogue of the conquering barbarians.

Are these Russians “barbarians or are they saints”? — those were exactly the words used by French critics in attempting to fathom the causes of the sudden tide of interest in Russian Literature in France. The critics were seized with the impression that Russian authors did not merely write novels, but celebrated mass as it were, with the “why and wherefore” ever present in all they wrote. There was a strange fascination in the “new gospel” these writers were preaching. In their works new horizons and a new world were being opened to the astonished gaze of their Western European readers.



Was this unprecedented success the result of a mere whim of literary taste among the jaded and volatile Frenchmen? Its persistence and its rapid conquest of the reading public throughout the world preclude a negative answer to our question.

It was the new world, both of men and of emotions, into which the foreign reader was introduced, and it was the new spiritual attitude of the Russian writers that supplied the real cause of the conquering march of Russian Literature.

What are the peculiar traits that exercised such a potent influence on the foreigner? A more or less satisfactory answer can be given only when a thorough examination is made of the country and the people that produced this Literature. Have they not grown trite, these dicta that "Literature is the mirror of the spiritual life of a nation," that "the literary history of a nation is the history of the nation's psychology," etc.?

Geographically, Russia (European, I mean chiefly) is one vast plain with hardly an elevation within its confines. It has a negligible length of seacoast (particularly navigable for a considerable part of the year) and several sluggish, if majestic, rivers. Thus, while presenting practically no natural barrier to foreign incursions, Russia, on the other hand, has enjoyed the advantage of easy communication among the various tribal and racial elements that composed it. For centuries, it is true, such relations were far from amicable, yet the fact stands that intercourse was free and easily achieved. Again, the absence of mountain barriers on the North placed no obstacle in the way of the icy winds from the Arctic Sea, and though the southernmost regions of Russia, such as the Crimea and Caucasus, may be a land of olives and oranges, there is unbroken winter with permanent snow-roads and sleighs and sleighbells for several months even in the South, following upon the scorching heat of summer. And this contrast in temperature has tended but to make the Russian physique more rugged and inured to hardships.

Ethnologically, the ancient Slavs were longheads, while the various Finnish and Mongolian races were chiefly of the broadhead type. At present the Russians present both types, with the intermediate mesocephalic form, and they are darker of eye and hair than might be gathered from descriptions in classical and medieval authors.

The history of Russia is usually dated from 862, when, tired of continuous squabbles and wars, the natives of Novgorod in the North called a Norse tribe, the Russ, "to come and rule, for our land is great and abundant, but order it has none." In time the bold Viking princes sailed down the Dnieper (where the capital, Kieff, was situated), and even stood at the gates of Constantinople, which they left after collecting rich tribute. From Byzantium the Russian prince Vladimir introduced Christianity (985), after refusing the overtures of Mohammedan missionaries because of their opposition to the use of spirituous liquors, as "the joy of the Russians is [in] drinking." Under the Byzantine priesthood, monasteries were founded, schools established, a primitive Literature (liturgical, patristic, and annalistic) chiefly of translations, but at times original as well, sprang up; the common law was codified, and intercourse and even intermarriage with the ruling houses of Western Europe grew up during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Slavic system of dividing up principalities among all the sons and bestowing the chief authority on the oldest in the house, *i.e.* seniority of the brothers over the sons of the deceased, split up Russia into innumerable petty domains which were in constant warfare with one another. Conspiracies and parricidal exploits went on for centuries. The Tartar Invasion (1224-1237) found Russia in no condition to resist it, and for two hundred and fifty years the invaders trampled the Russians under foot, encouraging internecine war among the princes, selling for a price the thrones and lives of rulers to their less scrupulous and wealthier rivals. They humiliated the rulers by enforced

visits to pay homage to the Tartar Khans and enslaved, tortured, and massacred, the populace. Inter-marriage between Russians and Tartars, both forcible and voluntary, became quite common. Asiatic customs, policies, methods of government, and criminal justice blotted out whatever Western culture had been acquired by Russia and reduced the Russians almost to the invaders' own level of barbarism. Yet in those dark times a line of shrewd princes at Moscow brought that obscure town to the forefront and made it Russia's rallying-point. From Moscow the final expedition against the Tartars was made in 1480, and their Khanates on the Volga were added to Russia some seventy years later. In 1547 John IV, the Terrible, was crowned Tsar of Russia, after more than two centuries of "gathering together of Russia" on the part of the Muscovite princes, in the course of which teachers, artisans, artists, and architects from Western Europe were brought in. In 1597 the peasants were fastened to the soil, serfdom was established, and in 1654 Little (Southern) Russia joined the realm of the Muscovite Tsars.

By the end of the seventeenth century Moscow had a large colony of foreigners skilled in all manner of trades, quartered in the so-called German (=foreign) Village, a suburb of the capital. Here Peter the Great was initiated into European military methods and the art of navigation and conceived the idea of pursuing his studies in Holland *incognito*. On his return he made up his mind "to cut a window to Europe" by founding St. Petersburg (1703) and making it his capital. Peter I ruled Russia literally with a "big stick" and forced Western European dress, customs, schools, books, as well as a reformed alphabet, upon his unwilling subjects. His final triumph over that royal knight-errant, Charles XII of Sweden, made Russia a European power to be reckoned with, and Peter assumed the title of Emperor of all the Russias. During the reigns of his female successors, German influences

were all powerful in all departments of life, but the wars with Frederick the Great brought on a reaction, and with Catherine II (1762-1796) a long line of Russian court-favorites begins. From that time Gallomania becomes rampant. The restless "Semiramis of the North" established numerous commissions for effecting radical reforms both governmental and social. She coquetted with the liberal ideas of the Encyclopedists, and carried on a voluminous correspondence with Voltaire and Diderot. No sooner had the liberal seeds begun to sprout than the Empress became reactionary in the extreme, eradicating "plots" and "revolution" with a hand that knew no mercy. But during the few liberal years of her reign Russian life pulsed with great intensity.

The Empress herself wrote more than a score of comedies, dramatic sketches, and operatic librettos, all fully national in subject and genuinely popular in language and treatment, quite a contrast to the artificial pseudo-classicism prevalent for nearly half a century. Under Alexander I (1801-1825) Russia experienced a process of liberal reforms during the first half of the reign, and rabid reaction in the latter half. During their march upon Paris and their sojourn there, in the course of the Napoleonic Wars, the Russians had absorbed too many liberal ideas to suit the victorious Emperor, and the Holy Alliance was the result. Thenceforth Russia became part and parcel of Europe in her politics and in her Literature. Nicholas I (1825-1855) still further curtailed the liberties of his subjects, but police tyranny and the censorship reached their highest point after the days of 1848. The last seven years of his reign were the "Darkest Age" of Russian Literature. The liberal beginnings of Alexander II (1855-1881) brought "the Sixties," the culminating point in Russian Literature, followed by the great movement of "going to the people" in the Seventies. Reaction of a severity almost equaling the period of 1848-1855 set in with Alexander III (1881-1894). The rule of Nicholas II, characterized by Hague

Peace Conferences before the World and "Red Sundays" at home, is of to-day and need not be dwelt upon.

Such has been Russia's history, the foundation on which its Literature was reared. The instrument in question, the Russian language, has had enough admirers to save one the delicate task of rhapsody, though a tolerable acquaintance with several modern tongues and familiarity with the languages of Greece and Rome would seem to warrant having an opinion on the subject.

Lomonosoff, "Russia's First University" in Pushkin's felicitous phrase, one of the world's few all-embracing geniuses of the type of Aristotle and Leibniz, with the gift of poetry in the bargain, says, in the Dedication of his Russian Grammar (1755): —

"Charles V, Emperor of Rome, was wont to say that it is proper to address oneself in Spanish to God, in French to friends, in German to the enemy, and in Italian to the female sex. Had he been skilled in (the knowledge of) Russian, he would doubtless have added that in the last named it behooves one to speak to all the above. For therein he would have found the magnificence of Spanish, the vivacity of French, the strength of German, the tenderness of Italian, and, besides, the opulence of Greek and Latin and their forceful gift for concise imagery. The powerful eloquence of Cicero, the magnificent stateliness of Virgil, the pleasing poesy of Ovid, do not lose their worth in Russian. The finest philosophical concepts and reasoning, the multiform properties and changes of nature occurring in this visible edifice of the universe and in the intercourse among men as well, have, in our tongue, locutions befitting and expressing the matter."

Over a hundred years later, Turgenieff, a master of the principal modern languages, thus voiced his admiration for Russian: —

"In days of doubt, in days of distressing meditations on the fate of my country, in thee alone I trust, O Russian language, great, mighty, truthful, free" . . .

"But it is impossible to believe that such a language was not given to a great people."

An opinion fully indorsed by a Frenchman, De Vogt , who says, "The Russian Language is undoubtedly the richest of all the European tongues."

Of the three distinct varieties (into which Russian, roughly speaking, is subdivided), the "Little Russian" in the South of Russia, "White Russian" in the Western provinces bordering on Germany and around the Baltic coast, and "Great Russian" spoken in the rest of Russia by nearly seventy million souls, — this last is the literary language, the speech of Moscow being its purest form. On the other hand, St. Petersburg, from a literary point of view, is even more than the Paris of Russia, for every writer of note, no matter where born, has gravitated to the capital; and this has given an additional impulse towards a single literary language.

With these physical, historical, and political conditions, Russia presents certain special psychological characteristics which, in part at least, are the result of such conditions.

This huge expanse of earth's surface, often without a single tree for hundreds of miles, with only a carpet of grass in summer and a thick mantle of snow in winter, makes the Russian self-centered and contemplative, with a strong tendency towards the mystical, the vague, and the fantastic.

The early mingling of Slavic, Norse, and Finnish elements, centuries of Byzantine influence with its sapping of secular life to foster monastic ideals, two hundred and fifty years of Mongolian domination and intermarriage, followed by a faint taste of Italian Renaissance in the artistic labors of the Fioraventis, thereupon a forcible inoculation of Western manners and civilization by Peter I, finally to be succeeded by unbroken intercourse with Western Europe, — this process has brought it about that to-day Russia is, for the tourist, culturally (as she is geographically) the middle ground between Western Europe and Asia, and justifies to a certain degree Havelock

Ellis's characterization of Russia as the *barbarian* country in Europe, just as lately he has labeled Spain the surviving *savage* country in Europe.

The commingling of such contrasting elements has made "the Russian in reality a well-tempered alloy of the two great racial stocks, the European longheads and Asiatic broadheads," and has given him the peculiar traits that have stood him in good stead in gaining his position among the nations.

The Russian's emotional expansiveness, the recklessness with which he expresses his feelings, as shown in the habit of kissing and embracing among men (on meeting after a long separation), in his tropical enthusiasm and tears at the theater, in the whole-heartedness with which he goes in for the work he chooses — that is what most strikes a foreigner.

And with this are combined a simplicity and frankness that seem brutal to a staid Anglo-Saxon or a courtly Latin. The "broad Russian nature," a "soul wide-open" (like a door ajar), are the current phrases among the Russians themselves. To confer the highest encomium upon a man in his private or public relations is to say that he is "a man with a soul," a "soulful man," a "soul of a man."

Such simple-heartedness and sincerity make a Russian fearfully zealous in his ideals. He accepts ideas no matter by whom propounded, and immediately makes them a part of himself. As Brandes says:—

"The cultivated Russian understands and always has understood the living, the new, the newest in foreign countries, and does not wait till it becomes cheap because it is old or has gained currency by the approbation of the stranger's countrymen. The Russian catches the new thought on the wing. Their culture makes a modern race, with the keenest scent for everything modern."

Having once made an idea or ideal his own, a Russian will unflinching carry it to its bitter end. He will not yield even in the face of its *reductio ad absurdum*.

It is this devotion to ideals that has caused tens of thousands of the flower of Russian youth to leave their kindred and homes and "go to the people," live and work among and for the peasants, share their simple fare, their joys and their sorrows, and give their lives in the prisons, in Siberia and on the gallows, with a stoicism and martyr's exaltation, that have aroused the wonder of the civilized world. But it is also this same devotion to ideals that makes the tender-hearted Russian unhesitatingly shoot down men by the hundreds, when these men happen to be among those who misrule Russia. To the unthinking it may seem a cruelty incompatible with that almost feminine tenderness. But who would deny the tender love of Brutus for Cæsar and the logic of his arguments for killing Cæsar?

Altruism and a burning zeal combine into a well-defined sense of responsibility which becomes almost oppressive. It makes the Russian youth mature early and age too soon.

On the one hand an ardent love for one's fellow-beings, on the other the iron hand of an autocratic government; the outbursts of hopeful youth countered by the fury of merciless repression, — there is the environment which explains the apparently causeless oscillation between hopefulness and pessimism, unbridled merriment and fathomless grief, which lies in the make-up of every Russian. That master of Russian character, Pushkin, sang more than seventy years ago: —

"Something kindred, dear is sounded,  
In my coachman's songs unending:  
Now 'tis merriment unbounded,  
Then again 'tis grief heart-rending,"

and elsewhere: —

"How sadly sings the Russian Maiden,  
Like our Muse, a songstress sorrow-laden.  
. . . All our race,  
From coachman to the foremost poet,



We all sing dolefully. A dismal whine  
 A Russian's song is, ever know it;  
 Begins: "Your health!" a funeral dirge in fine.  
 Though Muse and Maid sing mournfully,  
 I like their plaintive melody."

Clearly, as has been said, "the Russians are radicals in everything, in faith and infidelity, in love and hate, in submission and rebellion."

In analyzing "De Rerum Natura" Professor Mackail states that with Lucretius "the joy and glory of his art come second to his passionate love of truth, and the deep moral purport of what he believes to be the one true message for mankind. . . . His mission . . . is that light of truth which is "clearer than the beams of the sun or the shining shafts of day."

"A Roman aristocrat, living among a highly cultivated society, Lucretius had been yet endowed by nature with the primitive instincts of the savage. He sees the ordinary processes of everyday life—weaving, carpentry, metal-working, even such specialized forms of manual art as the polishing of the surface of marble—with the fresh eye of one who sees them all for the first time. Nothing is to him indistinct through familiarity. In virtue of this absolute clearness of vision it costs him no effort to throw himself back into prehistoric conditions and the wild life of the earliest men."

Almost two thousand years after Lucretius, history has repeated itself in the case of the Russian writers. They have brought to their task the same passionate love of truth and the savage's clearness of vision in approaching the phenomena of human life they chose to deal with; qualities just as precious in their way as the ancient Greek's *Forschungsgeist*—the craving for investigation (if this free rendering may be pardoned), and his unflinching sense of artistic proportion.

This is what made Russian authors realists *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, what gave Russia a naturalist school in Literature decades before anybody in Western Europe had ever thought of realism or naturalism. Whether it was due to his superior quali-

fication for the special end in view, or precisely because his mind was untutored and unsophisticated and therefore unspoiled, makes no difference for the point in hand. The fact remains that a Russian writer could no more help seeing life and action exactly as they were, and then depicting them as he saw them, than a Greek could help expressing himself in art with a wonderful sense of proportion.

Add to these traits the Russian's innate emotionality and you have the basis of the all-pervading humanity of Russian Literature as a whole, its *teaching mission*, or "pity" as it has often been called, which must not be confounded with didacticism. A comparison of the works of the modern Russian writers with the realistic productions of their French rivals will make the matter quite clear. The Frenchmen, in developing their negative characters, and following up the succession of their psychological states with the minutest details, give one the impression of delivering a prosecuting-attorney's speech in court; they have no sympathy with their characters of non-heroic stamp, they bring up all those wonderfully wrought out protocol minutiae only the more effectively to draw a crushing verdict from their readers.

To the Russian authors, on the other hand, the famous line of Terence —

Homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto —

"I am a man : I deem nothing human foreign to me" —

is the principle *par excellence* ; it is their chief and movingspirit. People with weak wills, with high-strung nerves, affected by the many other maladies of the day, are not looked down upon, but evoke the heart-felt pity of the author, who sees in them but incomplete portions of human beings as designed by their Creator, members of society crippled by the vagaries of the private, social, and political life of our times. It is this quality that made Gogol consider that the greatest merit of his work consisted in the fact that "he surveyed all this hugely

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rushing life, through laughter seen by the world and *tears invisible and unknown to it.*" It is this quality again that moved a foreign critic to say that Tolstoy "possesses the skill of an English chemist with the soul of a Hindu Buddhist."

To what extraordinary lengths this gift of sympathy with the characters depicted, of placing themselves so to speak in their heroes' skin, can go with the Russian writers, may be gathered from the following anecdote, sufficiently attested to be quoted here.

"One dreary winter day Tolstoy and Turgenieff, in their aimless rambles, came upon a broken-down old horse waiting for its driver, in the piercing cold. Tolstoy walked over to the horse and tenderly patting the shivering animal, depicted its pedigree, past history, and its feelings at the moment, in a few masterly strokes, with such power, boundless love and compassion, that Turgenieff half-jokingly burst out: 'Lyoff Nikolayevich! you surely must have had several generations of horses among your ancestors, for otherwise you could not feel so deeply for this horse.'"

This was the secret mainspring that enabled Tolstoy (in common with the other great Russian writers) to depict with equal facility, sureness of touch and unerring power, all kinds of characters: children, adults, and old folk; men and women in all walks of life, from rulers of nations, through ministers, statesmen, courtiers, great noblemen and clergymen, down to the smallest prison official who can be bought with a pound of sugar; the martyrs of the Russian revolution and its dungeon-keepers, executioners, and hardened jailbirds; the most ideal representatives of Russian womanhood and the women of the gutter.

But this altruism in dealing with others makes them just as cruel in dealing with themselves (in their remorseless self-analysis and self-criticism) as they are tender in dealing with others, for in depicting in both cases with equal fidelity to actual life, they are drawn by their extreme idealism to

explain away the faults of others while scourging themselves for the same.

A gang of convicts, with many a murderer and hardened criminal among them, on the foot-wearying tramp to Siberia evoke nothing but the most effusive outbursts of sympathy (often taking the material shape of donations in money, clothes, and provisions) on the part of the villagers by the road. Yet those same peasants, after committing a crime, will in most cases, under the stress of awakened conscience, rush to the market-place to make a clean breast of it before the whole community, pleading with the fellow-villagers to shower abuse and blows on them as sinners unworthy of their God's image.

But no matter how strongly marked these humane tendencies might be, they would probably remain isolated cases, if there had been no conscious striving after definite ideals, had they not been enthroned as principles that should be the beacon lights of the advanced writers among the Russians.

True, Dyerzhavin's (1743-1816) whole claim to immortality was based on being the bard of Catherine II's achievements:—

"I shall extol, I shall proclaim thee,  
Through thee immortal be myself,"

but he also takes credit for

"With a smile telling the truth to Tsars."

As for Pushkin, who as a lad wrote —

"The old Dyerzhavin us has noticed,  
And on the brink of grave has blessed,"

he has entirely different claims. He, whom partisans of "Art for Art's sake," "pure Art," etc., proclaimed their ideal and idol, — he will have his imperishable monument for this reason:—

"And of my people I long for this shall be beloved  
That kindly feelings with my lyre I used to wake;  
That by the vivid charm of verses I was useful  
And mercy to the fallen I invoked."

It is on the invoking of "mercy to the fallen," the "waking of kindly feelings," the actual "usefulness" of his poetry, that Pushkin bases his claims to immortality.

In another poem, "The Echo," he distinctly lays it down as the poet's duty to vibrate in consonance with the multitudinous events of life, even though himself receiving no response from any one: —

#### THE ECHO

"There roars a beast in forest's gloom,  
Or horn blares, or thunders boom,  
Or maiden sings beyond the holm; —  
To every tone  
Thy answer in air's vacant dome,  
Thou dost intone.

"Thou hearkenst to the thunders gruff,  
The voice of storm and waves far-off,  
And shout of rustic shepherds rough; —  
Comes answer back.  
But thou gett'st none. As badly off .  
A bard's, alack!"

And this is the keynote of Russian Literature and literary criticism. Every Russian author of note has distinctly stated that his literary work is but a means for a certain well-defined purpose, a straight aiming at a sturdy reality, not a blind groping after vague and diffuse ideals.

The faltering verse of Russia's first would-be poet, Kantemir (1708-1744), becomes a social satire against the senseless opposition to the reforms of Peter the Great. The odes of Lomonosoff (1711-1765) attain a genuine poetic ring when dealing with the value of knowledge for benighted Russia. The comedies of Fonvizin (1745-1792), the first artistic creations (along with their lesser contemporary achievements by Catherine II) on truly Russian lines, scourge the excesses of

worshipping foreign manners and customs, and plead for the national simplicity of olden days.

Griboyedoff (1795-1829), in his "Misfortune from Intelligence," that heart-rending cry of a man that loved his country only too well, had for his direct object to combat the baneful influence of the fad for aping everything French.

Lermontoff (1814-1841) forges his deadliest darts, pours out the fiercest venom of his "iron verse, suffused with bitterness and anger," against the triviality and shallowness of the society of his time. The Eternal Judge has given him the omniscience of a prophet: —

"Of love and truth I then commenced  
To herald undefiled teachings;  
Then all my fellow-men incensed,  
At me stones hurled for my preachings."

At eighteen, Gogol (1809-1852) writes in his letters: "I have consecrated my whole life to doing good," "all my powers to nothing but the advantage of the fatherland," "almost since the age of mental immaturity I burned with the unquenchable zeal of making my life indispensable for the welfare of the State; I eagerly sought to contribute the slightest benefit whatever."

Turgenieff (1818-1883), "the Westerner," whom Taine considered "one of the most perfect artists the world has produced since the classic period," on the very threshold of his literary career takes his Hannibalian oath never to make peace with his "enemy," to fight to a finish that enemy — the institution of serfdom — and actually leaves Russia the more effectively to strike his blows. His "Annals of a Sportsman" (1847-1851), an infinitely superior artistic achievement to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," produced the effect aimed at by the author. Alexander II, who avowed the strong impression Turgenieff's sketches had made on him, emancipated the serfs in 1861.

Tolstoy (1828–1910), in the early fifties, when an author was safe from the rigors of reprisals only in the realm of “pure Art,” proclaims in a personal outpouring, “I shall write, but not as you do, for I know *wherefore* I shall write.”

His “Sebastopol” sketches conclude as follows: “Where is the embodiment of evil which is to be avoided? Where, in this story, is the embodiment of good which is to be imitated? Who is its villain and who the hero? All are good and all are bad. But the hero of my story whom I love with all the powers of my soul, whom I have striven to reproduce in all his beauty and who always has been, is, and will be beautiful, is truth.”

Or elsewhere, in the preface which Tolstoy wrote for the Russian translation of Amiel’s “Journal”: “For we love and need an author only in proportion as he reveals to us the inner process of his soul, of course if this process is new and has not been gone through before. Whatever he may write — a play, scientific work, novel, philosophical treatise, lyric poem, critique, satire — what is dear to us in the writer’s work is but this inner working of his soul and not the architectural edifice, into which most of the time (and I even think, always) he lays his maimed thought and feeling.”

As for the folk-novel movement of the period of “going to the people,” suffice it to quote a letter of Ryeshetnikoff (1841–1871) to Nyekrasoff: “I conceived the idea of describing the life of the *burlaks* (bargemen on the Volga) in order that I might, even in the slightest degree, help these poor toilers.”

It may be pointed out here that this view had permeated all branches of Russian art at the time. Thus the composer Dargomyzhski wrote in 1857: “I have no intention to degrade music to the level of a pastime. I want the sound to express the word directly. I want truth.” He strove for the impression of truth and realistic representation, while Musorgski, the follower of this “great teacher of musical truth,” laid this down as the articles of his own realistic faith: “artistic rep-

resentation of material beauty is childishness, the infantile age of Art"; "Art is a medium of communion with mankind, not its aim."

Thus whether in the jeremiads of Radishcheff against serfdom or in Fonvizin's and Griboyedoff's satires on the stupid mania for imitating foreign manners, or Gogol's scourging of official corruption from lowest to highest, or Turgenieff's pleading for the serfs, or the whole folk-novel movement in behalf of the starving emancipated peasants, or Tolstoy's glorification of the common people (and in his actual teachings), or Dostoyefski's plea for the humble, the downtrodden, and the criminals, or Gorki's appeals for the outcast and the tramp, Russian Literature has been faithful to its mission: to direct the minds of its readers for the betterment of Russian society as a whole by bettering the lot of those who most urgently need it, to tell the unvarnished truth in describing Russian life.

Owing to the extraordinary conditions of Russian political and social life, with its argus-eyed censors and dreadful system of espionage, Literature has by force of circumstances become the only means, the exclusive arena for struggle against the evils of Russian political, economic, and social life. Even the establishment of a free school is strongly objected to by the government and implies untold difficulties. Tolstoy's pedagogic labors in Yasnaya Polyana had been made the subject of an especial investigation with a view to finding traces of revolutionary activity. Through certain circumstances, however, Tolstoy went unmolested and was even commended where thousands of others were visited with exile or imprisonment.

In this its special mission, Literature in the narrower sense of belles-lettres was powerfully supported by all the advanced Russian literary critics who took their cue from the great authors of Russia. Thus the interdependence between Literature and life, and the function of Literature as a disseminator of



the tenets of the advanced minds in Russia, soon became the Russian literary critics' profession of faith. A literary production was judged not from a purely literary point of view, but according as it furthered or retarded social progress, as it served to help the attainment of the social and ethical ideals of society. A work would be condemned unhesitatingly if it lost connection with life by tearing itself away into the regions of Art for Art's sake.

Here one might say that the Russian's well-known idealism apparently runs counter to his uncompromising realism in Literature. But this contradiction is only surface deep; the Russian sees everything with the eyes of a thoroughgoing realist, but back of it all is a higher purpose, the realism becomes handmaid of a high ideal: to advance social progress, to better the lot of the unfortunate.

Naturally, in the clash and turmoil of several generations of opposing views, many a writer or critic has gone to the absurd limits of his pet theories, the more so when we bear in mind that the Russian nature tends to run to extremes.

Thus, on the one hand, Pisareff (1840-1868), a critic who swayed the minds of Russian youth during the Sixties, proclaimed the ancillary office of Literature by pushing his utilitarian theories to the point of declaring that all the works of a second-rate poet are not worth a pair of boots, the labor of a plodding cobbler. And years before Ibsen had disowned verse for the purposes of drama, the great satirist Shchedrin, himself guilty of riding Pegasus in his younger days, declared, in a moment of exasperation, that those who wrote verse seemed to him lunatics trying to walk along a string stretched on the floor, and half sitting down at each step.

On the other hand, a whole group of poets, under the reactionary pressure of Nicholas I's reign preached "Art for Art's sake," and their most characteristic representative, Fet, who hymned abstract beauty untiringly for over half a century, was the most hard-handed among the many Russian hard-

handed masters in dealing with his peasants and in his frequent polemic writings on this subject. The mere fact that they preached pure Art, that they kept aloof from life's stern realities, made such preachers advocates of the existing order in the eyes of all those who felt the weight of governmental oppression. Thus the view, that the realistic school of writers stood for progress and light and the partisans of "pure Art" were allies of the forces of darkness and reaction, was only strengthened.

While these two currents of literary thought and ideals have to a certain degree existed side by side, they really carried on a ceaseless struggle for supremacy. But with each successive swing of the pendulum the ethical school, with its altruistic teachings of love for the "lesser brother," invariably gathered more and more force at the expense of the school of pure art. The victories of the former ever represent the culminating points in the history of Russian letters; the latter as unfailingly mark the gloomiest periods in the reigns of a succession of gloomy autocrats. There is a throbbing joy of life, a hopefulness and vigor throughout the length and breadth of Russian Literature, when the ethical cause is predominant; there is marked melancholy, pessimism almost bordering on despair, when "pure Art" sends forth its full bloom.

But with all this Russian Literature has mirrored every shade of the literary movements of Western Europe. For have we not seen that the Russian possesses to an extraordinary degree, the capacity for grasping new ideas immediately upon coming into contact with them, and also the power of adapting and adopting, appropriating them at once?

And thus it is that the Russians were pseudo-classicists in the middle of the eighteenth century, were Encyclopedists (as, for example, in Catherine II) with Voltaire and Diderot, wept tears of sentimentalism with Karamzin (1766-1826)

over the novels of Richardson and Sterne, grew violent romanticists when Byron was the undisputed overlord over the minds of Pushkin and the youthful Lermontoff, became *plus royalistes que le roi* over Hegelian dialectics, with the famous "all that which exists is reasonable," in the Thirties and early Forties, then Darwinists and positivists and Spenserians and Schopenhauerians and symbolists and Nietzscheans and even, at last, decadents with a faint touch of pornography to boot, all in turn (at times somewhat behind-hand) as these movements succeeded one another in the thought of Western Europe. But all these numerous intellectual shades of opinion were almost immediately recreated and incorporated into the peculiarly national psychology of the Russian, with its sober realism of manner and high idealism of thought. The history of Russian Literature is thus at the same time the history of Russian thought.

Thus the saying current in Russia, that "the Frenchman will hit upon an invention, the Englishman will manufacture it, the German will import it into Russia for sale, and the Russian will come and steal it," has been shown to be true in other fields than industry. But the process has been much more than mere appropriation. It has been a laborious and painstaking process of transmutation and fusion. It has been a gathering of threads of somber color and bright color, garish and subdued, and weaving them into one majestic tapestry of a wonderful design and charming the sense of vision with the beauty of its composition and the harmonious blending of all the tints and shades of the rainbow.

It has been a fructifying process *par excellence*, not of cramming only or even of assimilation, whereby Russia has returned a hundred fold for what it has borrowed.

Some of the most prominent writers of France, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and America, of the last quarter of a century, have been more or less the product of the school of writing as exemplified in the works of Turgenieff, Dostoyefski,

and Tolstoy, and Bourget, Maupassant, James, Howells, Hauptmann, and D'Annunzio, to name but a few of a host, have clearly shown or expressly acknowledged their indebtedness to the Russian literary masters.

It is idle and perniciously misleading therefore to assert that Russian Literature has nothing original in it (as has been done in a curiously biased "History of Russian Literature," by K. Waliszewski, 1900), for "does it detract a whit from the quality of the magnificent ruby, when we are told that the element of which it is formed is a colored variety of corundum or alumina," actually the most abundant of the earths?

As for the future of Russian Literature, it of course is in the lap of the gods along with the future of Russia.

In order to avoid the perils of prophecy and to let a non-Russian, who is more competent in that sphere, pronounce upon the question of Russia's future, I shall conclude with these words of Havelock Ellis: —

"Russia at the present time is a vast laboratory for the experimental manufacture of the greatest European and Asiatic nation, fated to mold, as much probably as any nation, the future of the world. Such a process is always going on everywhere at some stage of acuteness, but in the rest of Europe the formative stage in the growth of peoples has long gone by, and while it lasted there were few or none able and competent to observe it. In Russia we see the process in its most acute form. This enormous birth-rate, this death-rate so enormous as sometimes to equal the births, this creation of human beings on so vast a scale and the testing and proving of them in the most trying of climates — in this great experimental operation Nature is, on the whole, still left to attain her own results in her own way. In such an acute and destructive process of natural selection, not only are the weakest lost, but a certain number of human failures are necessarily left. Thus there are neurotic and degenerate elements in all classes of society, though, as the comparative harmlessness of Russian criminality and the

absence of the physical signs of degeneracy clearly indicate, the process of selection on the whole works truly. The Russian pessimist and the hostile foreigner see nothing but decadence. The thoughtful observer knows that such decadence is but the inevitable by-product in the formative process of a great nation."

"Beyond any other European people the Russians possess a degree of receptivity, a radical humanity of feeling, a fund of high idealism, and a sense of the relationship of ideals to practical life, which cannot fail to carry them very far. These things, far more than either an outrageous militarism or the capacity for frantic industrial production, in the end make up civilization."

## XVII

### THE COSMOPOLITAN OUTLOOK

BY W. P. TRENT, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE title of this lecture is "The Cosmopolitan Outlook," undoubtedly a very high-sounding phrase, but, like most such phrases, exceedingly vague. I suppose it gives me a license to talk briefly about the general status of Literature, present and future, and to endeavor to discover what part Cosmopolitanism plays and may be expected to play in determining that status. Such a license plainly carries with it one advantage. It is not safe to contradict a man, however much one may dislike his utterances, when it is obvious that he is discussing a subject about which neither he nor any one else knows anything definite. On the other hand, I have a shrewd conviction that this apparent immunity from successful contradiction differs little from an opportunity to display my rashness as a generalizer, and that I am about to essay what has come to be in America a presidential rather than a professorial function. It is our presidents who fill our sails of thought with the winds of generalization. When Ulysses carried the bags of Æolus, it was his crew that let loose, while he slept, the angry and adverse blasts. But in our superior modern wisdom we have changed all that. It is our leaders themselves that let loose our gusty winds. It is our presidents, actual and potential, who tell us things about finance that are in very truth beyond the dreams of avarice, and the wits of political economists. It is our presidents who, in their philanthropic zeal, are ready to

regulate the size of our families and the length of our bookshelves. Into their perilous barks shall a mere professor attempt to climb? Ah, yes! for the public is platform-mad just as it is airship-mad. It is the duty of all of us, that have even the feeblest gift of tongue, to sacrifice ourselves to thee, O sovereign Demos, lest, to paraphrase Homer, we all perish in thy anger at being deprived of wind: —

*ὥς μὴ πάντες ὀλῶνται ὀδυσσαμένοιο τεῶο*

The Cosmopolitan Outlook! That seems to imply that, even if we are not all cosmopolitans now, we have a chance of becoming cosmopolitans one of these days, and that Literature will be affected by the change. Such an inference appears to be reasonable, but it would scarcely be safe to use it as the basis of any sort of discussion without previously answering many questions that naturally present themselves.

We Americans are a very composite people, but, in so far as a fusion of race characteristics has taken place among us, have we not tended to evolve into a people strongly marked by national characteristics of which we are exceedingly proud? We are great travelers — hence the talk one often hears of the American invasion of Europe — and we are very hospitable to strangers; but that these two facts involve the conclusion that in our ideals and our modes of thinking as a people we are true citizens of the world seems to me very doubtful. So far as my own studies and travels have led me to think about the matter, I have been left wondering whether one does not find among the educated Europeans of one's acquaintance more of that liberality and poise of thought, and more of that humanitarian idealism, which are or ought to be the fruits of a truly cosmopolitan spirit, than one finds among Americans. Facile adaptiveness, and easy-going tolerance, and superficial acquaintance with what the world is saying and doing, are probably found in larger measure among Americans than among any other people,

but they are not signs of real Cosmopolitanism as I understand the term. I will go farther and say that our Literature and our thought, while on the whole sound and adapted to our special needs, strike me as tending to become more national rather than more cosmopolitan. I sometimes even wonder whether we are not in a fair way of becoming one of the most parochical of peoples. Not long since, for example, one of our leading newspapers published among its obituaries those of a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, a dock engineer, a provision outfitter, and a great historian. The shortest notice, as might have been expected, was that of the scholar, the only one of the four men who had an international reputation. The newspaper knew its business, and presumably it knew that its readers would not even care to be given the name of a single one of the historian's books. Perhaps this is entirely as it should be, and certainly I am expressing only the opinion of one moderately well-informed individual. But, as these must be my generalizations and no one else's, I may as well give them honestly and fearlessly. We Americans as a people have in ourselves the elements that go to make a true Cosmopolitanism, and we have them perhaps to a greater extent than any other people. We have in our broad system of public instruction, in our peace societies, our scientific associations, our philanthropical and other federated bodies, instrumentalities admirably fitted for fusing these elements and increasing their working power; but in some respects we seem to be less truly cosmopolitan than we were half a century ago. A profound belief in the rights of man as man, is, I think, an essential element of true Cosmopolitanism. Did not that belief help to keep alive the courage of Abraham Lincoln, and of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, and of millions of men, women, and children at home, during the dark days of the Civil War? Where is that profound belief now? Look into your hearts and answer, and remember that this question is put to a Northern



audience by a Southern-born man. And answer another question, please. Is a profound belief in the rights of man as man likely to dominate a generation proud of a newly acquired imperial sway, reared on the precepts of the gospel of strenuosity, and naïvely exhilarated by its comparatively easily acquired wealth and power? Would there be any reason to be surprised if some one were to remark that he considered Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to have been far truer cosmopolitans than any American statesman of this modern epoch, which has seen the United States definitively enrolled among the so-called great powers of the world? And do not fancy for a moment that I am talking about politics, not Literature. The spirit that determines a people's political ideals cannot be separated, much as a certain type of critics would like to perform the feat, from the spirit that determines its literary and artistic ideals. Mere international exchange of books, mere contemporaneous evolution, in the several nations, of similar schools of art and thought, mere exploitation throughout the world of more or less identical literary forms applied to varying material, may be signs of the approach of a truly Cosmopolitan Literature; but they afford no proof that we possess such a Literature now or that we shall soon possess it. A truly Cosmopolitan Literature, in my judgment, will come into existence only in that nation or those nations wherein a majority, or a dominant minority, of true citizens of the world, that is, of professed servants of humanity, live and move and have their being.

I wondered a moment ago whether one does not find among cultivated Europeans more of that liberality and poise of thought, and more of that humanitarian idealism which ought to be the fruits of a truly cosmopolitan spirit, than one finds among Americans of the present generation. The comparison here implied is rendered less offensive by the reflection that the peoples of Europe have been welded into a

sort of unity by social and political forces generated, for the most part, in the remote past and operative through many centuries, while the people of America have been welded into such unity as they display by the operation of comparatively new forces, in conjunction with many of the older forces operative in Europe. The pressure that makes for equality, the pressure which we may broadly denominate as democratic, has worked more slowly in Europe than it has here, and the spirit of caste has been more powerful. Hence, as it seems to me, there has been more occasion in Europe than in America for the soul of man to brood upon the imperfections of society and to find refuge in liberal and idealistic thought. It is the old story that adversity is a better nurse of virtue than prosperity. I do not wish to push the point too far, but it certainly seems to me to be a significant fact, even after all due allowances are made for the effects of individual genius, to find what many persons regard as the greatest cosmopolitan force in Literature to-day, proceeding from one of the most backward and oppressed of all the great peoples of the world. The most potent voice of my generation, if I know what the words I am using mean, is that of a true cosmopolitan who is also a Russian, Count Tolstoy.

I know that he is sneered at as a visionary, and that one eminent American is said to have pronounced him to be a moral pervert. I know that he preaches love instead of force, and that thereby he lays himself open to the charge of being a weakling. I know that his views with regard to Art and Science, to modern governmental methods and policies, and to that much lauded virtue, patriotism, are, to say the least, not acceptable to the average citizen anywhere, and are anathema to many well-to-do persons plethoric in pocket and neck. But I know also that he is the only living man in private life, and one of the very few since Voltaire, whom an organized and powerful government has with good reason shown itself to be afraid to punish for his unacceptable

writings; I know also that few even of his most inveterate opponents are bold or foolish enough to express a doubt of his courageous sincerity and essential nobility; and — what is the main thing to me — I know that no other contemporary voice speaks so directly to my heart and to the hearts of thousands of other men throughout the world. And I know too that the message of Tolstoy, whatever its impractical elements, represents what I understand as true Cosmopolitanism; that is to say, citizenship in that ideal republic of men and women of which the good and wise in all ages have dreamed, and for the coming of which they have labored. In so far as that message in its spirit is influential to-day, in so far, in my opinion, Literature and life have a cosmopolitan outlook of high significance. I trust that prosperity and the intellectual cramping and flattening, which so often result from what I have called the democratic pressure, will never seriously impede the promulgation of that message in this country and in the world at large, and that in a broad sense it may fairly be taken as an index of the spirit of that Literature of the future in which our sons and our grandsons will find solace and inspiration.

What matter if coming generations accept as entirely valid not a single article of his idealistic creed! The main consideration should be for us, as it will be, I think, for them, the man's essentially idealistic attitude toward his fellows. He is a great cosmopolitan because he is a great altruistic idealist; because, with ardor undiminished and faith unperurbed, he stands there an aged prophet amid the Russian snows: —

“Still nourishing the unconquerable hope,  
Still clutching the inviolable shade.”

The hope I have just expressed is not jeopardized by a curious condition of affairs to which we must now turn our thoughts. We are considering the Cosmopolitan Outlook

at a time when, as perhaps never before, the minor nationalities are zealously fostering their political and racial aspirations through their Literatures. We are all familiar with the efforts a group of men are making to establish a modern Irish Literature, to which if one of my colleagues applies his favorite epithet British, he will do it at the peril of his life. The evolution of Norwegian Literature has been one of the most striking facts in the literary history of the past half century. With the winning of her national unity, which was attained in a considerable measure through the patriotic labors of her men of letters, Italy has taken the place due her by inheritance in the ranks of the nations illustrious through their literary and scientific productivity. In Bohemia Czech aspirations are cherished by a group of writers, and in Belgium concerted efforts are making to establish Flemish as a literary language. Among the colonies of the British Empire and the republics of South America similar tendencies are at work. As I write these words, I see an announcement of "A Treasury of South African Poetry and Verse." It is not called "A Golden Treasury," although it comes from a region of gold mines, but the editor, though modest, has all the boldness one expects of a pioneer. He is evidently rash enough to try to distinguish poetry from verse, or else to mingle them without discrimination.

And within the large nations themselves a somewhat analogous tendency may be discovered. Within the past half century we have been almost swamped with books, especially novels and histories, devoted to the exploitation of regions, sections, provinces, towns, and small localities. This local Literature is partly no doubt the result of a search for some new thing, partly the result of the imitation of the work of the leaders of the realistic and naturalistic schools of fiction, partly the result of an intensification of interest in all that pertains to the nation and the race to which the writer belongs. However this may be, it is at least clear that any one

casually examining the reviews and advertisements in such a journal as the *Athenæum* for the past twenty-five years might be tempted to declare that, while he found many evidences of what may be called international influences in Literature, he found little evidence of anything worthy of being called cosmopolitan, but on the other hand much to tempt him to believe that the vast majority of writers think far less of the world and humanity than they do of the nation, section, and race to which they belong.

I am not sure that I should care to quarrel with any such putative reader of the dignified journal I have just named; but I am sure that, as I have already said, the cause of true Cosmopolitanism in Literature is not really jeopardized by the conditions that have been described. True Cosmopolitanism, that is, citizenship in an ideal republic whose bounds are coextensive with those of the entire human race, may well coexist with whatever tends to make that race stronger and better, and the local or national Literature that is worthy of the name surely tends to make men better men by making them better citizens of the lands and localities in which their lives have been cast. If you will let me make a personal application of what I am saying, I shall perhaps be better able to bring out my point. I read the other day in manuscript a little idyllic story of Southern life that in its charm reminded me of "Cranford." When I put that story down, I felt that I was a better Southerner for having read it, but that I was also a better adopted Northerner and a better American. But, on the same line of reasoning, was I not a better man, that is a better cosmopolitan, a better qualified citizen for that ideal republic to which we should all yield our highest allegiance? Surely I was, and surely no man in his senses will protest against patriotism rightly understood, or against national and local tendencies in Literature and Art. These are essential to our mental and spiritual health as men and women, and it is of healthy minds and

souls that the ideal republic must be constituted. What we have a right to protest against is near-sightedness and narrow-mindedness in these matters. Chauvinistic patriotism, spread-eagleism, as we Americans call it, vulgar satisfaction with ourselves and with fellow-vulgarians, childish strenuosity and other forms of noisy emptiness, these defects of character, when they are embodied in books that are mistaken for Literature, undoubtedly retard the progress of the cosmopolitan spirit, not by making us more patriotic Americans, Englishmen, or Germans, as the case may be, but by making us more intolerable and useless as men and women.

Much the same thing is true with regard to those international literary relations which many persons, I suspect, tend to confuse with Cosmopolitanism in Literature. In so far as improved facilities of intercourse tend to spread rapidly a knowledge and appreciation of what other peoples are doing in the realms of art and thought, and in so far as the influence of foreign ideas makes for the lessening of intellectual narrowness, without at the same time modifying deleteriously the distinctive merits of the respective national Literatures, it can scarcely be doubted that we may view with gratification rather than with apprehension the present status of Literature throughout the world. Even France, the most intellectually self-centered of countries, has come to display more and more interest in the Literatures of other nations with no probable detriment to herself, and, in the realm of scholarship at least, with no little advantage to the other countries. Witness, for example, the elaborate monographs upon British and American writers which we owe to the industry and acumen of a group of French scholars. As to the influence of French Literature upon our own, especially in the matter of form, there can be little question that we owe much to the country of Balzac and Augier, while France itself owes something to the country of Cooper and Poe. But I must frankly confess that, while these interna-

tional literary relations are important, especially to students of literary history, and while they seem to-day to be in a satisfactory condition, I cannot perceive that the present age deserves in any especial degree to be called cosmopolitan, or that a mere rapid and free interchange of ideas and books is *ipso facto* a thing to be devoutly prayed for. It all depends, I think, upon the nature of the ideas and the books. For example, I notice that the works of several modern British novelists are speedily translated into French and appear to interest a small number of Frenchmen; but this seems to me to be a phenomenon of very minor importance, since it would be exceedingly rash to prophesy that any, or at least many, of the books translated will be read twenty-five years hence either in France or in England itself. On the other hand, the vogue of Byron in France and in the rest of Europe nearly a hundred years ago, ought to be looked upon, whatever our personal animus toward Byron, as a phenomenon of great and of cosmopolitan importance. The reason of this distinction is obvious. The modern writers are men of talents, doubtless, but in most cases they are apparently destitute of large seminal thoughts and of ideas capable of arousing the emotions of whole peoples, or large sections of a people. This was not the case with Byron, although it is plain that his great vogue was due, not merely to his individual genius, but to the fact that the French Revolution had prepared the European public to appreciate his liberal and fiery utterances. Whatever the cause of his vogue, however, there is no question that his was far more than an international influence. It was a cosmopolitan influence of great significance, because it made for political and individual liberty. With all his faults Byron lived and died a splendid fighter in the war for humanity. By his side fought with equal valor that more ethereal combatant, Shelley. And with them stood — I will not say fought, for it is hard to think of him save as a benign and beneficent spirit — the man

who was probably — peace to the shade of Thomas Carlyle — the noblest British writer of his age, Sir Walter Scott. If we could believe that the year 1910 would usher in twenty such years of really cosmopolitan Literature as were ushered in by 1810, we ought to be more than satisfied with the present Cosmopolitan Outlook.

But how idle is all such talk! How little do we know about the present, and how less than little we know about the future. Take your stand with me for a moment at the year 1710. Who, reading the two-paged *Daily Courant* of that year, or the tri-weekly *Post-Boy*, or the weekly *Review*, would ever have thought that two centuries later the newspaper press of London, and New York, and other great cities would constitute one of the wonders of the world? Who would have foretold the rise of the popular magazine or the practical triumph of prose over verse as a medium of expression for almost every form of Literature? Who would have thought that the day would ever come when men would seriously contend whether Alexander Pope, the brilliant young author of the newly published "Pastorals" was entitled to be called a poet? Who, reading the "Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Signor Rozelli," perhaps the best story of the year 1709 and a translation at that, would have thought that within a decade "Robinson Crusoe" would be beginning its career of popularity, and that about two decades later the modern novel would be born? The year 1710 came after a singularly barren decade that followed the death of Dryden, and, if a pessimist had declared at any time during those ten years that the glory of British poetry was forever eclipsed, it would have been difficult to prove that he was playing the part of a superfluous raven. Such a pessimist would not have been likely to clinch his argument by exclaiming that we should never see another poet equal to Milton, but, if he had done so, he would have uttered a prophecy which, in the judgment of many, would



have held true for at least two centuries. Yes, this talk about what the future holds for us is often very idle, but it is none the less interesting. We are creatures designed, as the poet tells us, to look before and after. I prefer at times to look back rather than forward, to point out that we are not quite so wonderful as we think ourselves; to suggest, for example, that a great general like Marlborough, and a versatile, dashing statesman like Bolingbroke, must, despite their earthly antagonism, take more pleasure in conversing with each other in Hades than in watching as ghostly spectators the doings of whatever successors they may have in the England of this year of grace. But I have been set up here to be a kind of watchman and prophet, not to be a *laudator temporis acti*, and, to change the figure suddenly, I must continue to roll my stone up the hill of futurity only to have it roll down again as the stones of prophecy are forever doing.

I spoke a moment ago of the practical triumph of prose over verse as a medium of expression for almost every form of Literature. Does that mean that the Literature of the future, the Literature that, as we hope, is to make for true Cosmopolitanism, is to perform its task of converting us into citizens of the ideal republic without the aid of new poetry answering to new spiritual and mental needs? Heaven forbid that I should answer "Yes." I could not give so pessimistic an answer in view of the hosts of young poets who are lifting their voices on high, a formidable band among whom I count enough friends and former pupils to insure my discretion. We have been told of late that all writers who are unfortunate enough to date from the wrong side of a certain year, let us say 1860, are hopelessly antiquated. If that be so, then our younger poets need no longer complain that they are overshadowed, and they need pay no attention to the fact that the great democratic public reads, in the main, newspapers and fiction, adds to these forms of prose some

history and biography and volumes of travel and criticism, and, as a rule, leaves poetry severely alone. Those of us, however, who are scanning the literary horizon cannot so easily shut our eyes to what the large public is doing. We cannot but observe, not only that prose is increasingly written and increasingly read, but that in narrative, dramatic, and idyllic work, that is in a very large portion of imaginative Literature, it has almost supplanted verse. Even for lyrical purposes prose has shown its adaptability, and it is possible that in the form of confessions, diaries, and jottings it may afford a means of subjective utterance to future writers who probably, if they lived now, and certainly if they had lived in the past, would turn or would have turned to poetry. It seems almost idle to deny that, with rare exceptions, the modern poet addresses a very limited and a very sophisticated audience. These poets and their readers may constitute a small literary aristocracy, and by their talk and writing they may secure a certain amount of prominence, but how widespread an influence they exert, and what the future of any form of aristocracy is to be in a world of ever increasing democratic pressure, is more than I or any other man can say. Certain it is that, while some of us disparage the eighteenth century, that age of prose and reason seems justified of its prose grandchild, the twentieth century. The glib critics who have been borrowing that catch phrase "the Renaissance of Wonder" had better wonder a little at the dominance and the growing power of that instrument of expression which the despised century practically fashioned. Most of us even read the great poems of other nations in prose translations, that is, when we read them at all.

It seems to me beyond dispute that the literary outlook, whatever promise it contains of the spread of cosmopolitan ideas, contains abundant promise of the spread of the power of prose. If the eighteenth century had not devoted itself

to the task of creating a serviceable modern prose, the nineteenth century would have been obliged to essay it, for it is obvious that it was long ago determined in the courts of heaven that the laureate of a Triumphant Democracy should write in unmeasured language. I am far from intending to extol this order of things; I am merely doing my duty in calling attention to it. For old-fashioned beings of whom it may truly be said that the love of poetry is their breath of life, and I trust I am one of them, there is, however, no lack of consolation. Never before were the great poets so accessible; never before were the forces of education so turned to the task of subduing the susceptible mind of youth to the influence of the supreme poetic masterpieces. A reasonable amount of pessimism is, I confess, congenial to me, but it would seem positively foolish to be altogether pessimistic with regard to the future of poetry in the light of these plain facts of our democratic culture. I do not believe that the spread of cheap books, the founding of libraries, the insistence upon the study of Literature in our schools and colleges, can result in anything but an absolute increase in the number of men and women who, to quote Matthew Arnold's inspiring prophecy, will find in poetry "an ever surer and surer stay." There is no room for denying or grudging the relative preponderance of prose, or for not admitting that in many respects it fulfils excellently functions which were of old fulfilled by poetry. But there is equally no occasion for being blind to the fact that the transcendent glory of poetry is unextinguishable. The great poetical classics are, thus far, the world's chief storehouses of noble thought and feeling. The supreme poets are of all mortals our most satisfying and unfailing sources of pleasure and delight. What matter if the day of the epic and the poetic drama appear to be, not precisely over, but far past the meridian? Are not Homer, Sophocles, Vergil, Dante, Shakspeare, Milton, and Goethe in a very true sense more completely alive than ever, answer-

ing as they do to the spiritual and mental needs of an ever larger public? and who shall say that another master-poet may not at any moment make his appearance, and adapt to the purposes of his genius the old forms of poetry or else invent new forms? And whatever the future of the epic and the poetic drama, and the idyll and the more or less didactic poem, who is rash enough to limit the future scope and influence of that large and varied form of more or less personal utterance in verse which we vaguely denominate lyrical poetry? If, as seems not unlikely, the drawing together of the nations and the increasing pressure of democracy tend to render more and more uniform and unspectacular the external lives of men, may it not well be that the life of the mind and soul will become to a greater and greater degree the province of the writer's chief activities, and the scene of the reader's greatest delights? The success already achieved by novelists of a psychological type and by diarists and autobiographers, together with the extraordinary progress made of recent years in metrical technic, especially as that is applied to forms of lyric, would seem to warrant the expectation that, even should the objective types of Literature, and particularly of poetry, undergo a permanent decline, the subjective types may well experience a corresponding development. It cannot be too often repeated that the birth of new forms of Literature does not imply the death of old forms, so far as concerns the life-giving power of the latter. Scott's novels are still read and will continue to be read even in this "up-to-date" country of ours, in which Mr. Henry James, Jr., first hailed the light of day with a salutation so intricately phrased and so dissimilar to "that large utterance of the early gods" that it has been puzzling Hyperion ever since.

What I have just been saying about the possible preponderance of subjective over objective Literature may seem at first thought to be contradicted by certain aspects of the life

and Literature of to-day. The life of action has been led and preached by many notable men, its exhilaration has been celebrated in prose and verse, and it has been illustrated recently by achievements too fresh in your minds to demand specification. Never before were men more widely awake to the outward facts of the lives of other men, and never before was their curiosity with regard to objective details so catered to as by latter-day journalism. Compare what the average citizen of the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth knew of what was going on in the world with what the average subject of the literally more spacious empire of King George knows. Listen to the outcries that are raised against the continuous flow of population to the cities and the decline, not merely of rural, but of private, life. Think of the part played in our civilization by the objective sciences, and by the colossal, more or less materialistic, forms of industry. What chance is there in our roaring modern chaos for the cultivation of those choice gifts of the spirit which are so essential to the creation of great subjective Literature, repose, and observation, and reflection? Some satirically minded persons actually doubt our power to think a real thought, just as with reason they complain that nowadays no one writes a charming or an interesting letter. They believe that, following the example of the Southern convention which shortly before the Civil War resolved, according to the story, that there should be a Southern Literature and that William Gilmore Simms, Esq., should be requested to write it, the entire country will soon resolve that there be an American thought and that President or Ex-President So and So be requested to think it.

To certain types of mind the picture I have just drawn will seem a caricature; to other types it may seem surcharged with a depressing realism. I will not defend it or explain it, except to say that I am far from believing that we are warranted in viewing the status of modern life with dis-

gust or the future with trepidation. I doubt whether any one can prove that we are a whit more materialistic than our fathers were; in fact, the supposition that we are scarcely harmonizes with what we know about the course of human history and the evolution of the human mind and body. To sensitive spirits the jar of our modern civilization is as disagreeable as the vibration of the machinery in one of our mammoth and swift steamships. But the steamship carries us safely, and our civilization will probably carry us safely, too. We are awake to our present discomforts; we forget the evils that have been left behind. Never before was human vulgarity so flaunted in our faces, but that is mainly because our senses have been, as it were, extended by the telephone, the telegraph, the printing-press, and similar instrumentalities, and because the masses have been rapidly losing their apathy, and have been compelling recognition of the fact that they are human beings, not chattels. The evolution is, on the whole, natural and, as always, it has not been uniform. We have gained in wealth and comfort; we have probably lost in some of the aristocratic graces and amenities of life. For example, we no sooner win a triumph of any kind than we forthwith proceed to vulgarize it. Our heroes get into squabbles and go on the lecture platform. Our publishers and magazines force the genius of a promising writer, and often kill it. But we have the heroes and the men of genius, and I see no special reason to doubt either that we shall learn to foster them better or that they will learn to preserve themselves. And meanwhile the masses of the people have not only been growing in wealth and leisure, but, what is more important, they have been becoming more and more conscious of the great and beautiful in conduct and in art. In other words, we are probably warranted in saying of our generation, as of every other generation perhaps for several centuries past, that it is gaining more than it is losing.

But I have not yet fully explained why I think that, despite the objectivity of modern life, the future of Literature may lie largely in the realms of the subjective. I think this because it seems to me that the growing pressure of democracy, which is all the stronger because of the colossal and materialistic character of much of our civilization, and the smoothing down or obliteration of national and racial idiosyncrasies, which seems destined to result from the drawing together of the peoples, must sooner or later force the strongly individual mind and soul back, as it were, upon themselves and stimulate their subjective utterance. If the society of the future is to be more or less socialistic in type, and if the earth is destined to become one great peaceable workshop of humanity, the forces of individualism will either diminish in power or seek new outlets. Certain types of leaders may become even more influential and spectacular in action than ever before — I hope they will not be the demagogues of the future — certain kinds of artists may exploit their genius in large and essentially objective achievements; but the majority of writers, especially the poets and the critics, may not improbably find that the lines of least resistance to their talents or genius lie in the fields of subjective rather than of objective Literature, and the majority of men and women, deprived more and more of their opportunities for outward distinction, by reason of what may be called their mere atomistic status in the social mass, and rendered more subtle and acute in their mental and æsthetic faculties through education and the cumulative influences of heredity, may not only find their chief solace and inspiration in reading, but may seek it in the works of writers who like themselves are the slaves as well as the exponents of a self-centered subjectivity.

This generalization is, I opine, sufficiently hazardous to satisfy latter-day requirements, but it should be observed that it might be supported, did time permit, by certain ar-

guments drawn from the history of Literature. It is supported, also, by the normal tendency of human nature to avoid contests with the immortals. Once or twice a Diomede may engage in combat with a god, and here and there the triumphs of the objective masters of the past may be challenged; but the tendency will almost surely be to leave those divine masters standing on their isolated elevations, and to press forward into new paths for new victories, whether easier than the old or not, it would be ungracious to inquire. But what, in the midst of all this generalization, has become of the subject I am supposed to be in the main discussing, the subject of Cosmopolitanism? Has it vanished out of sight? Not completely, I trust, or at any rate not so far that it cannot be hauled down by the string of desultory speculation, much as small boys haul down their kites. I shall try to get it down in the following way. The writers of the future, if they exploit the personal types of Literature, will surely make for the spread of the spirit of true Cosmopolitanism, by developing in themselves and their readers an ever increasing respect for man, the center of the new Literature and of the new society. The more man is dwarfed in his outward position in the social order, the more, if he is to preserve his dignity, nay his civilization, he must uphold his essential nobility as a child of God. The huger and the more crushing our democracy, the more sacred grow the rights of man as man, — a fact of which sociological students and workers are fully conscious, and of which the general public is vaguely conscious. But a recognition of the rights of man as man is, as we saw, an essential element of true Cosmopolitanism. It is also an essential element of all subjective Literature that is worthy of the name. Hence we seem warranted in concluding that, if the Literature of the future becomes increasingly personal and subjective, it will also become increasingly effective in the spread of true Cosmopolitanism; that is, in the spread of the spirit that makes for



citizenship in the ideal republic. And in thus serving the cause of Cosmopolitanism, the Literature of the future will also serve itself, I believe, in one very important way. We are accustomed to think of the commanding character of the great works of objective Literature and to invest their creators with an atmosphere of grandeur. The great works of subjective art somehow seem smaller to us. Set the sonnets of Shakspeare, for example, over against three or four of his greatest plays and see whether you do not understand what I am trying to say. Anything, then, that will make for the largeness and dignity of subjective Literature is to be welcomed if that Literature is to be dominant in the future. Such an element of largeness and of true grandeur is to be found in the services the Literature of the future may render to the sacred cause of human brotherhood. And in performing those services the writer, be he poet or proseman, need by no means eschew all the forms of objective art. He may take the older forms and infuse them with the spirit of subjectivity and personality. He may serve the cause of Cosmopolitanism as Mr. Thomas Hardy has done in his amorphous but great poetic drama, "The Dynasts." He may inspire a detestation of war and an acquiescence in the reign of that democracy which will, we trust, afford no scope for the sinister energies of another Napoleon. Yes, the outlook for Cosmopolitanism is also the outlook for large and noble work on the part of every writer filled with love for his fellow-men. I refuse to believe that the future is with the shallow writers who glory in war and who hear in the whirl of machinery the only voice of God.

But in this mixed life of ours every incitement must be accompanied by a warning. We may rightfully cherish splendid hopes for the future of Literature and of life upon this planet of ours, but we must remember that the forces of civilization move slowly and that the law of loss and gain will not soon be abrogated. For many an age to come new

parties, new social movements, new schools of art and thought, will have their birth, maturity, and death, and still the ideal republic will seem to lie on the horizon, or only just beyond it. New achievements of the spirit of man will fill the world with enthusiasm, but thoughtful men will still be puzzled to determine whether on the whole to laugh or cry at the game of life they see playing before their eyes. When the South Pole is discovered, the first objects the wise discoverer will look for will be two spectral forms crouching upon the desiderated and hitherto inaccessible spot, the shades of Democritus and of Heraclitus, of the philosopher who was forever laughing at the follies of mankind and of the philosopher who was forever weeping at them.

The mention of Democritus and Heraclitus, and of the folly of mankind, suggests naturally the propriety of my bringing this lecture to a conclusion, lest you should take it upon yourselves to play the philosophers and leave me holding the floor of folly. I shall merely say, therefore, that while as a lecturer I deem it my duty to see as much good as I can in the present and future of Literature, as a man I am naturally disposed to sympathize with Heraclitus. The particular folly that draws my tears is the undue neglect of the ancient classics in our education and the consequently increasing lack of their beneficent influence upon our Literature. I miss their simple power and their pure charm, and I fear lest, as the years go by, not only will these essential qualities of the very highest Literature be less perceptible, but that there will be fewer readers trained to demand them. I trust that this is an entirely unjustifiable manifestation of my pessimistic bias. I trust that the vital energy of some of our writers, the subtle and studied art of others, the spiritual aspirations of others who draw some, at least, of their inspiration from the great ages of faith, the high unselfish idealism of others who draw their inspiration from the needs of the present and the promise of the future, will all work in

harmony to give us a Literature which in power and beauty will be worthy to vie with that of Greece itself. But I should be dishonest if I confounded my hopes with my beliefs. When, O you disdainful, strenuous moderns, and you mystic and sentimental neo-medievalists, and you eager-eyed, altruistic cosmopolitans of the future, when will you ever give us anything comparable with that superb Iliad, with its rolling rhythm, its stirring action, its heroic characters, its impressive scenes, its large, simple truth to nature, and its charm of the far-off past?

## XVIII

### LITERARY CRITICISM

BY J. E. SPINGARN, PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE  
LITERATURE

"WHAT droll creatures these college professors are whenever they talk about art," wrote Flaubert in one of his letters, and voiced the world's opinion of academic criticism. For the world shares the view of the Italian poet that "monks and professors cannot write the lives of poets," and looks only to those rich in literary experience for its opinions on Literature. But the poets themselves have had no special grudge against academic criticism that they have not felt equally for every other kind. For the most part, they have objected to all criticism, since what each mainly seeks in his own case is not criticism, but uncritical praise. "Kill the dog, he is a reviewer," cried the young Goethe; and in our own age William Morris expressed his contempt for those who earn a livelihood by writing their opinions of the works of others. Fortunately for criticism, it does not live by the grace of poets, to whom it can be of small service at its best, but by the grace of others who have neither the poet's genius nor the critic's insight. I hope to persuade you this evening that the poets have been mistaken in their very conception of the critic's craft, which lives by a power that poets and critics share together. The secret of this power has come to men slowly and the knowledge they have gained by it has transformed their idea of Criticism. What this secret is, and into what new paths Criticism is being led by it, is the subject of my lecture to-night.

At the end of the last century, France once more occupied the center of that stage whose auditors are the inheritors of European civilization. Once more all the world listened while she talked and played, and some of the most brilliant of her talk was now on the question of the authority of Criticism. It is not my purpose to tell you (what you know already) with what sober and vigorous learning the official critics of the *Revue des deux Mondes* espoused the cause of old gods with the new weapons of science, and with what charm and tact, with what grace and suppleness of thought, Jules Lemaitre and Anatole France, to mention no others, defended the free play of the appreciative mind. Some of the sparks that were beaten out on the anvil of controversy have become fixed stars, the classical utterances of Criticism, as when Anatole France described the critic not as a judge imposing sentence, but as a sensitive soul detailing his "adventures among masterpieces."

To have sensations in the presence of a work of art and to express them, that is the function of Criticism for the impressionistic critic. His attitude he would express somewhat in this fashion: "Here is a beautiful poem, let us say 'Prometheus Unbound.' To read it is for me to experience a thrill of pleasure. My delight in it is itself a judgment, and what better judgment is it possible for me to give? All that I can do is to tell how it affects me, what sensations it gives me. Other men will derive other sensations from it, and express them differently; they too have the same right as I. Each of us, if we are sensitive to impressions and express ourselves well, will produce a new work of art to replace the work which gave us our sensations. That is the art of criticism, and beyond that criticism cannot go." We shall not begrudge this exquisite soul the pleasure of his sensations or his cult of them, nor would he be disconcerted if we were to point out that the interest has been shifted from the work of art to his own impressions. Let us suppose that you say to him:

"We are not interested in you, but in 'Prometheus Unbound.' To describe the state of your health is not to help us to understand or to enjoy the poem. Your criticism constantly tends to get away from the work of art, and to center attention on yourself and your feelings." But his answer would not be difficult to find: "What you say is true enough. My criticism tends to get farther and farther from the work of art and to cast a light upon myself; but all criticism tends to get away from the work of art and to substitute something in its place. The impressionist substitutes himself, but what other form of criticism gets closer to 'Prometheus Unbound'? Historical criticism takes us away from it in a search of the environment, the age, the race, the poetic school of the artist; it tells us to read the history of the French Revolution, Godwin's 'Political Justice,' the 'Prometheus Bound' of Æschylus, and Calderón's 'Magico Prodigioso.' Psychological criticism takes me away from the poem, and sets me to work on the biography of the poet; I wish to enjoy 'Prometheus Unbound,' and instead I am asked to become acquainted with Shelley the man. Dogmatic criticism does not get any closer to the work of art by testing it according to rules and standards; it sends me to the Greek dramatists, to Shakspere, to Aristotle's 'Poetics,' possibly to Darwin's 'Origin of Species,' in order that I may see how far Shelley has failed to give dramatic reality to his poem, or has failed to observe the rules of his *genre*; but that means the study of other works, and not of 'Prometheus Unbound.' Æsthetics takes me still farther afield into speculations on art and beauty. And so it is with every form of criticism. Do not deceive yourself. All criticism tends to shift the interest from the work of art to something else. The other critics give us history, politics, biography, erudition, metaphysics. As for me, I re-dream the poet's dream, and if I seem to write lightly, it is because I have awakened, and smile to think I have mistaken a dream for reality. I at least strive to replace

one work of art by another, and art can only find its *alter ego* in art."

It would be idle to detail the arguments with which the advocates of the opposing forms of Criticism answered these questionings. Literary erudition and evolutionary science were the chief weapons used to fight this modern heresy, but the one is an unwieldy and the other a useless weapon in the field of æsthetic thought. On some sides, at least, the position of the impressionists was impregnable; but two points of attack were open to their opponents. They could combat the notion that taste is a substitute for learning, or learning a substitute for taste, since both are vital for Criticism; and they could maintain that the relativity of taste does not in any sense affect its authority. But these arguments are not my present concern; what I wish to point out is that the objective and dogmatic forms of Criticism were fighting no new battle against impressionistic Criticism in that decade of controversy. It was a battle as old as the earliest reflection on the subject of poetry, if not as old as the sensitiveness of poets. Modern literature begins with the same doubts, with the same quarrel. In the sixteenth century the Italians were formulating that classical code which imposed itself on Europe for two centuries, and which, even in our generation, Brunetière has merely disguised under the trappings of natural science. They evolved the dramatic unities, and all those rules which the poet Pope imagined to be "Nature still but Nature methodized." But at the very moment when their spokesman Scaliger was saying that "Aristotle is our emperor, the perpetual dictator of all the fine arts," another Italian, Pietro Aretino, was insisting that there is no rule except the whim of genius and no standard of judgment beyond individual taste.

The Italians passed on the torch to the French of the seventeenth century, and from that day to this the struggle between the two schools has never ceased to agitate the progress

of Criticism in France. Boileau against Saint-Évremond, Classicists against Romanticists, dogmatists against impressionists, — the antinomy is deep in the French nature, indeed in the nature of Criticism itself. Listen to this: "It is not for the purpose of deciding on the merit of this noble poet [Vergil], nor of harming his reputation, that I have spoken so freely concerning him. The world will continue to think what it does of his beautiful verses; and as for me, I judge nothing, I only say what I think, and what effect each of these things produces on my heart and mind." Surely these words are from the lips of Lemaitre himself! "I judge nothing; I only say what I feel." But no, these are the utterances of the Chevalier de Méré, a wit of the age of Louis XIV, and he is writing to the secretary of that stronghold of authority, the French Academy. For some men, even in the age of Boileau, criticism was nothing but an "adventure among masterpieces."

No, it is no new battle; it is the perpetual conflict of Criticism. In every age impressionism (or enjoyment) and dogmatism (or judgment) have grappled with one another. They are the two sexes of Criticism; and to say that they flourish in every age is to say that every age has its masculine as well as its feminine criticism,—the masculine criticism that may or may not force its own standards on Literature, but that never at all events is dominated by the object of its studies; and the feminine criticism that responds to the lure of art with a kind of passive ecstasy. In the age of Boileau it was the masculine type which gave the tone to Criticism; in our own, outside of the universities, it has certainly been the feminine. But they continue to exist side by side, ever falling short of their highest powers, unless mystically mated, — judgment erecting its edicts into arbitrary standards and conventions, enjoyment lost in the mazes of its sensuous indecision.

Yet if we examine these opposing forms of Criticism in



our own age, we shall find, I think, that they are not wholly without a common ground to meet on; that, in fact, they are united in at least one prepossession which they do not share with the varying forms of Criticism in any of the earlier periods of its history. The Greeks conceived of Literature, not as an inevitable expression of creative power, but as a reasoned "imitation" or re-shaping of the materials of life; for Aristotle, poetry is the result of man's imitative instinct, and differs from history and science in that it deals with the probable or possible rather than with the real. The Romans conceived of Literature as a noble art, intended (though under the guise of pleasure) to inspire men with high ideals of life. The classicists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries accepted this view in the main; for them, Literature was a kind of exercise, — a craft acquired by study of the classics, and guided in the interpretation of nature by the traditions of Greek and Roman art. For these men Literature was as much a product of reason as science or history. The eighteenth century complicated the course of Criticism by the introduction of vague and novel criteria, such as "imagination," "sentiment," and "taste." But with the Romantic Movement there developed the new idea which coördinates all Criticism in the nineteenth century. Very early in the century, Mme. de Staël and others formulated the idea that Literature is an "expression of society." Victor Cousin founded the school of art for art's sake, enunciating "the fundamental rule, that expression is the supreme law of art." Later, Sainte-Beuve developed and illustrated his theory that Literature is an expression of personality. Still later, under the influence of natural science, Taine took a hint from Hegel and elaborated the idea that Literature is an expression of race, age, and environment. The extreme impressionists prefer to think of art as the exquisite expression of delicate and fluctuating sensations or impressions of life. But for all these critics and theorists, Literature is an expression of something,

of experience or emotion, of the external or internal, of the man himself or something outside the man; yet it is always conceived of as an art of expression. The objective, the dogmatic, the impressionistic critics of our day may set for themselves very different tasks, but the idea of expression is implicit in all they write. They have, as it were, this bond of blood: they are not merely man and woman, but brother and sister; and their father, or grandfather, was Sainte-Beuve. The bitter but acute analysis of his talent which Nietzsche has given us in the "Twilight of the Idols" brings out very clearly this dual side of his seminal power, the feminine sensitiveness and the masculine detachment. For Nietzsche, he is "nothing of a man; he wanders about, delicate, curious, tired, pumping people, a female after all, with a woman's revengefulness and a woman's sensuousness, a critic without a standard, without firmness, and without backbone." Here it is the impressionist in Sainte-Beuve that arouses the German's wrath. But in the same breath we find Nietzsche blaming him for "holding up objectivity as a mask"; and it is on this objective side that Sainte-Beuve becomes the source of all those historical and psychological forms of critical study which have influenced the academic thought of our day, leading insensibly, but inevitably, from empirical investigation to empirical law. The pedigree of the two schools thereafter is not difficult to trace: on the one side, from Sainte-Beuve through *l'art pour l'art* to impressionism, and on the other, from Sainte-Beuve through Taine to Brunetière and his egregious kin.

French criticism has been leaning heavily on the idea of expression for a century or more, but no attempt has been made in France to understand its æsthetic content, except for a few vague echoes of German thought. For the first to give philosophic precision to the theory of expression, and to found a method of Criticism based upon it, were the Germans of the age that stretches from Herder to Hegel. All

the forces of philosophical thought were focused on this central concept, while the critics enriched themselves from out this golden store. I suppose you all remember the famous passage in which Carlyle describes the achievement of German criticism in that age. "Criticism," says Carlyle, "has assumed a new form in Germany. It proceeds on other principles and proposes to itself a higher aim. The main question is not now a question concerning the qualities of diction, the coherence of metaphors, the fitness of sentiments, the general logical truth in a work of art, as it was some half century ago among most critics, neither is it a question mainly of a psychological sort to be answered by discovering and delineating the peculiar nature of the poet from his poetry, as is usual with the best of our own critics at present; but it is, not indeed exclusively, but inclusively, of its two other questions, properly and ultimately a question of the essence and peculiar life of the poetry itself. . . . The problem is not now to determine by what mechanism Addison composed sentences and struck out similitudes, but by what far finer and more mysterious mechanism Shakspeare organized his dramas and gave life and individuality to his Ariel and his Hamlet. Wherein lies that life; how have they attained that shape and individuality? Whence comes that empyrean fire which irradiates their whole being and appears at least in starry gleams? Are these dramas of his not veri-similar only, but true; nay, truer than reality itself, since the essence of unmixed reality is bodied forth in them under more expressive similes? What is this unity of pleasures; and can our deeper inspection discern it to be indivisible and existing by necessity because each work springs as it were from the general elements of thought and grows up therefrom into form and expansion by its own growth? Not only who was the poet and how did he compose, but what and how was the poem, and why was it a poem and not rhymed eloquence, creation and not figured passion? These are the questions

for the critic. Criticism stands like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the prophet and those who hear the melody of his words, and catch some glimpse of their material meaning but understand not their deeper import."

I am afraid that no German critic wholly realized this ideal; but it was at least the achievement of the Germans that they enunciated the doctrine, even if they did not always adequately illustrate it in practice. It was they who first realized that art has performed its function when it has expressed itself; it was they who first conceived of Criticism as the study of expression. "There is a destructive and a creative or constructive criticism," said Goethe; the first measures and tests Literature according to mechanical standards, the second answers the fundamental questions: "What has the writer proposed to himself to do? and how far has he succeeded in carrying out his own plan?" Carlyle, in his essay on Goethe, almost uses Goethe's own words, when he says that the critic's first and foremost duty is to make plain to himself "what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his eye, and how far, with such materials as were afforded him, he has fulfilled it." This has been the central problem, the guiding star, of all modern criticism. From Coleridge to Pater, from Sainte-Beuve to Lemaitre, this is what critics have been striving for, even when they have not succeeded; yes, even when they have been deceiving themselves into thinking that they were striving for something else. This was not the ideal of Aristotle when he tells us that the critic may censure a work of art as "irrational, impossible, morally hurtful, self-contradictory, or contrary to technical correctness." This was not Boileau's standard when he blamed Tasso for the introduction of Christian rather than pagan mythology into epic poetry; nor Addison's, when he tested "*Paradise Lost*" according to the rules of Le Bossu; nor Dr. Johnson's, when he laments the absence

of poetic justice in "King Lear," or pronounces dogmatically that the poet should not "number the streaks of the tulip." What has the poet tried to do, and how has he fulfilled his intention? What is he striving to express and how has he expressed it? What impression does his work make on me, and how can I best express this impression? These are the questions that nineteenth-century critics have been taught to ask when face to face with the work of a poet.

The theory of expression, the concept of Literature as an art of expression, is the common ground on which critics have met for a century or more. Yet how many absurdities, how many complicated systems, how many confusions have been superimposed on this fundamental idea; and how slowly has its full significance become the possession of critics! To accept the naked principle is to play havoc with these confusions and complications; and no one has seen this more clearly, or driven home its inevitable consequences with more intelligence and vigor, than an Italian thinker and critic of our own day, Benedetto Croce, who has received of late a kind of official introduction to the English-speaking world in the striking compliment paid to him by Mr. Balfour in his recent Romanes Lecture. But I for one needed no introduction to his work; under his banner I enrolled myself long ago, and here re-enroll myself in what I now say. He has led æsthetic thought inevitably from the concept that art is expression to the conclusion that all expression is art. Time does not permit, nor reason ask, that we should follow this argument through all its *pros* and *cons*. If this theory of expression be once and for all accepted, as indeed it has been partly though confusedly accepted by all modern critics, the ground of Criticism is cleared of its dead lumber and its weeds. I propose now merely to point out this dead lumber and these weeds. In other words, we shall see to what conclusions the critical thought and practice of a century have been inevitably converging, and what elements of the old

Criticism and the old literary history are disappearing from the new.

In the first place, we have done with all the old Rules. The very conception of "rules" harks back to an age of magic, and reminds the modern of those mysterious words which the heroes of the fairy-tales are without reason forbidden to utter; the rules are a survival of the savage *taboo*. We find few arbitrary rules in Aristotle, who limited himself to empirical inductions from the experience of Literature; but they appear in the later Greek rhetoricians; and in the Romans, empirical induction has been hardened into dogma. Horace lays down the law to the prospective playwright in this manner: "You must never have more than three actors on the stage at any one time; you must never let your drama exceed five acts." It is unnecessary to trace the history of these rules, or to indicate how they increased in number, how they were arranged into a system by the classicists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how they burdened the creative art of that period. They were never without their enemies. We have seen how Aretino was pitted against Scaliger, Saint-Évremond against Boileau; and in every age the poets have astounded the critics by transgressing rules without the sacrifice of beauty; but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Romanticists banished them from the province of Criticism. The pedantry of our own day has borrowed "conventions" from history and "technique" from science as substitutes for the outworn formulæ of the past; but these are merely new names for the old mechanical rules; and they too will go, when criticism clearly recognizes in every work of art an organism governed by its own law.

We have done with the *genres*, or literary kinds. Their history is inseparably bound up with that of the classical rules. Certain works of literature have a general resemblance and are loosely classed together (for the sake of convenience) as lyric,

comedy, tragedy, epic, pastoral, and the like; the classicists made of each of these divisions a fixed norm governed by inviolable laws. The separation of the *genres* was a consequence of this law of classicism: comedy should not be mingled with tragedy, nor epic with lyric. But no sooner was the law enunciated than it was broken by an artist impatient or ignorant of its restraints, and the critics have been obliged to explain away these violations of their laws, or gradually to change the laws themselves. But if art is organic expression, and every work of art is to be interrogated with the question, "What has it expressed, and how completely?" there is no place for the question whether it has conformed to some convenient classification of critics or to some law derived from this classification. The lyric, the pastoral, the epic, are abstractions without concrete reality in the world of art. Poets do not write epics, pastorals, lyrics; they express themselves, and this expression is their only form. There are not, therefore, only three, or ten, or a hundred literary kinds; there are as many kinds as there are individual poets. But it is in the field of literary history that this error is most obvious. Shakspeare wrote "King Lear," "Venus and Adonis," and a sequence of sonnets. What becomes of Shakspeare, the creative artist, when these three works are separated from one another by the historian of poetry; when they lose their connection with his single creative soul, and are classified with other works with which they have only a loose and vague relation? To slice up the history of English Literature into compartments marked comedy, tragedy, lyric, and the like, is to be guilty of a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of Criticism; and literary history becomes a logical absurdity when its data are not organically related but cut up into sections, and placed in such compartments as these.

We have done with the comic, the tragic, the sublime, and an army of vague abstractions of their kind. These have grown out of the generalizations of the Alexandrian critics,

acquiring a new lease of life in the eighteenth century. Gray and his friend West corresponded with each other on the subject of the sublime; later, Schiller distinguished between the naïf and the sentimental. Jean Paul was one of many who defined humor, and Hegel among those who defined the tragic. If these terms represent the content of art, they may be relegated to the same category as joy, hate, sorrow, enthusiasm; and we should speak of the comic in the same general way in which we might speak of the expression of joy in a poem. If, on the other hand, these terms represent abstract classifications of poetry, their use in criticism sins against the very nature of art. Every poet re-expresses the universe in his own way, and every poem is a new and independent expression. The tragic does not exist for Criticism, but only Æschylus, Shakspeare, Racine. There is no objection to the use of the word tragic as a convenient label for somewhat similar poems, but to find laws for the tragic and to test creative artists by such laws as these is simply to give a more abstract form to the outworn classical conception of dramatic rules.

We have done with the theory of style, with metaphor, simile, and all the paraphernalia of Græco-Roman rhetoric. These owe their existence to the assumption that style is separated from expression, that it is something which may be added or subtracted at will from the work of art. But we know that art *is* expression, that it is complete in itself, that to alter it is to create another expression and therefore to create another work of art. If the poet, for example, says of spring-time that "Tis now the blood runs gold," he has not employed a substitute for something else, such as "the blood tingles in our veins"; he has expressed his thought in its completeness, and there is no equivalent for his expression except itself.

"Each perfect in its place; and each content  
With that perfection which its being meant."



Such expressions are still called metaphors in the text-books; but metaphor, simile, and all the old terms of classical rhetoric are signs of the zodiac, magical incantations, astrological formulæ, interesting only to antiquarian curiosity. To Montaigne they suggested "the prattle of chambermaids"; to me they suggest rather the drone and singsong of many school-mistresses. We still hear talk of the "grand style," and essays on style continue to be written, like the old "arts of poetry" of two centuries ago; but the theory of styles has no longer a real place in modern thought; we have learned that it is no less impossible to study style as separate from the work of art than to study the comic as separate from the work of the comic artist.

We have done with all moral judgment of Literature. Horace said that pleasure and profit are the end of art, and for many centuries the critics quarreled over the terms "pleasure" and "profit." Some said that poetry was meant to instruct; some, merely to please; some, to do both. Romantic criticism first enunciated the principle that art has no aim except expression; that its aim is complete when expression is complete; that "beauty is its own excuse for being." If the achievement of the poet be to express any material he may select, and to express it with a completeness that we recognize as perfection, obviously morals can play no part in the judgment which criticism may form of his work. No critic of authority now tests Literature by the standards of ethics.

We have done with "dramatic" criticism. The theory that the drama is not a creative art, but a by-product of the physical exigencies of the theater, is as old as the sixteenth century. An Italian scholar of that age was the first to maintain that plays are intended to be acted on a stage, under certain restricted physical conditions, and before a large and heterogeneous crowd; dramatic performance has developed out of these conditions, and the test of its excellence is the pleasure it gives to the mixed audience that supports it. This

idea was taken hold of by some of the German romanticists, for the purpose of justifying the Shakspearean drama in its apparent divergence from the classical "rules." Shakspeare cannot be judged by the rules of the Greek theater (so ran their argument), for the drama is an inevitable product of theatrical conditions; these conditions in Elizabethan England were not the same as those of Periclean Athens; and it is therefore absurd to judge Shakspeare's practice by that of Sophocles. Here at least the idea helped to bring Shakspeare home to many new hearts by ridding the age of mistaken prejudices, and served a useful purpose, as a specious argument may persuade men to contribute to a noble work, or a mad fanatic may rid the world of a tyrant. But with this achievement its usefulness but not its life was ended. It has been developed into a system, and become a dogma of dramatic critics; it is our contemporary equivalent for the "rules" of seventeenth-century pedantry. As a matter of fact, the dramatic artist is to be judged by no other standard than that applied to any other creative artist: what has he tried to express, and how has he expressed it? It is true that the theater is not only an art but a business, and the so-called "success" of a play is of vital interest to the theater in so far as it is a commercial undertaking. The test of "success" is an economic test, and concerns not art or the criticism of art, but political economy. Valuable contributions to economic and social history have been made by students who have investigated the changing conditions of the theater and the vicissitudes of taste on the part of theatrical audiences; but these have the same relation to criticism, and to the drama as an art, that a history of the publisher's trade and its influence on the personal fortunes of poets would bear to the history of poetry.

We have done with technique as separate from art. It has been pointed out that style cannot be disassociated from art; and the false air of science which the term "technique" seems

to possess should not blind us to the fact that it too involves the same error. "Technique is really personality; that is the reason why the artist cannot teach it, why the pupil cannot learn it and why the æsthetic critic can understand it," says Oscar Wilde, in a dialogue on "The Critic as Artist," which, amid much perversity and paradox, is illumined by many flashes of strange insight. The technique of poetry cannot be separated from its inner nature. Versification cannot be studied by itself, except loosely and for convenience; it remains always an inherent quality of the single poem. Milton's line —

"These my sky-robcs spun out of Iris' woof "

is called an iambic pentameter; but it is not true that artistically it has something in common with every other line possessing the same succession of syllables and accents; in this sense it is not an iambic pentameter; it is only one thing; it is the line: —

" These my sky-robcs spun out of Iris' woof."

We have done with the history and criticism of poetic themes. It is possible to speak loosely of the handling of such a theme as Prometheus by Æschylus and by Shelley, of the story of Francesca da Rimini, by Dante, Stephen Phillips, and D'Annunzio; but strictly speaking, they are not employing the same theme at all. Each artist is expressing a certain material and labeling it with an historic name. For Shelley Prometheus is only a label; he is expressing his artistic conception of life, not the history of a Greek Titan; it is the vital flame he has breathed into his work that makes it what it is, and with this vital flame (and not with labels) the critic should concern himself in the works of poets.

We have done with the race, the time, the environment of a poet's work as an element in criticism. To study these phases of a work of art is to treat it as an historic or social

document, and the result is a contribution to the history of culture or civilization, without interest for the history of art. "Granted the times, the environment, the race, the passions of the poet, what has he done with his materials, how has he converted poetry out of reality?" To answer this question of the Italian De Sanctis as it refers to each single work of art is to perform what is truly the critic's vital function; this is to interpret "expression" in its rightful sense, and to liberate æsthetic Criticism from the vassalage to *Kulturgeschichte* imposed on it by the school of Taine.

We have done with the "evolution" of Literature. The concept of progress was first applied to Literature in the seventeenth century, but at the very outset Pascal pointed out that a distinction must here be made between science and art; that science advances by accumulation of knowledge, while the changes of art cannot be reduced to any theory of progress. As a matter of fact, the theory involves the ranking of poets according to some arbitrary conception of their value; and the ranking of writers in order of merit has become obsolete, except in the "hundred best books" of the last decade and the "five-foot shelves" of to-day. The later nineteenth century gave a new air of verisimilitude to this old theory by borrowing the term "evolution" from science; but this too involves a fundamental misconception of the free and original movement of art. A similar misconception is involved in the study of the "origins" of art; for art has no origin separate from man's life.

"In climes beyond the solar road,  
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,  
The Muse has broke the twilight-gloom";

but though she wore savage raiment, she was no less the Muse. Art is simple at times, complex at others, but it is always art. The simple art of early times may be studied

with profit; but the researches of anthropology have no vital significance for criticism, unless the anthropologist studies the simplest forms of art in the same spirit as its highest; that is, unless the anthropologist is an æsthetic critic.

Finally, we have done with the old rupture between genius and taste. When Criticism first propounded as its real concern the oft-repeated question: "What has the poet tried to express and how has he expressed it?" Criticism prescribed for itself the only possible method. How can the critic answer this question without becoming (if only for a moment of supreme power) at one with the creator? That is to say, taste must reproduce the work of art within itself in order to understand and judge it; and at that moment æsthetic judgment becomes nothing more nor less than creative art itself. The identity of genius and taste is the final achievement of modern thought on the subject of art, and it means that fundamentally the creative and the critical instincts are one and the same. From Goethe to Carlyle, from Carlyle to Arnold, from Arnold to Wilde, there has been much talk of the "creative function" of Criticism. For each of these men the phrase held a different content; for Arnold it meant merely that Criticism creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age, — a social function of high importance, perhaps, yet wholly independent of æsthetic significance. But the ultimate truth toward which these men were tending was more radical than that, and plays havoc with all the old platitudes about the sterility of taste. Criticism at last can free itself of its age-long self-contempt, now that it may realize that æsthetic judgment and artistic creation are instinct with the same vital life. Without this identity, Criticism would really be impossible. "Genius is to æsthetics what the ego is to philosophy, the only supreme and absolute reality," said Schelling; and without subduing the mind to this transcendental system, it remains true that what must always be inexplicable to mere reflection is just what gives power to

poetry; that intellectual curiosity may amuse itself by asking its little questions of the silent sons of light, but they vouchsafe no answer to art's pale shadow, thought; the gods are kind if they give up their secret in another work of art, the art of Criticism, that serves as some sort of mirror to the art of Literature, only because in their flashes of insight taste and genius are one.



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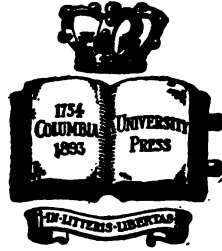
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